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SIMON & GARFUNKEL

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER 50 YEARS

GRACELAND
INSIDE THE CONTROVERSY

"I'M REALLY QUITE EXCITED!"
STILL CRAZY ARCHIVE INTERVIEWS

RHYMIN' SIMON
THE SOLO YEARS

AMERICAN TUNES
EVERY ALBUM, IN DEPTH

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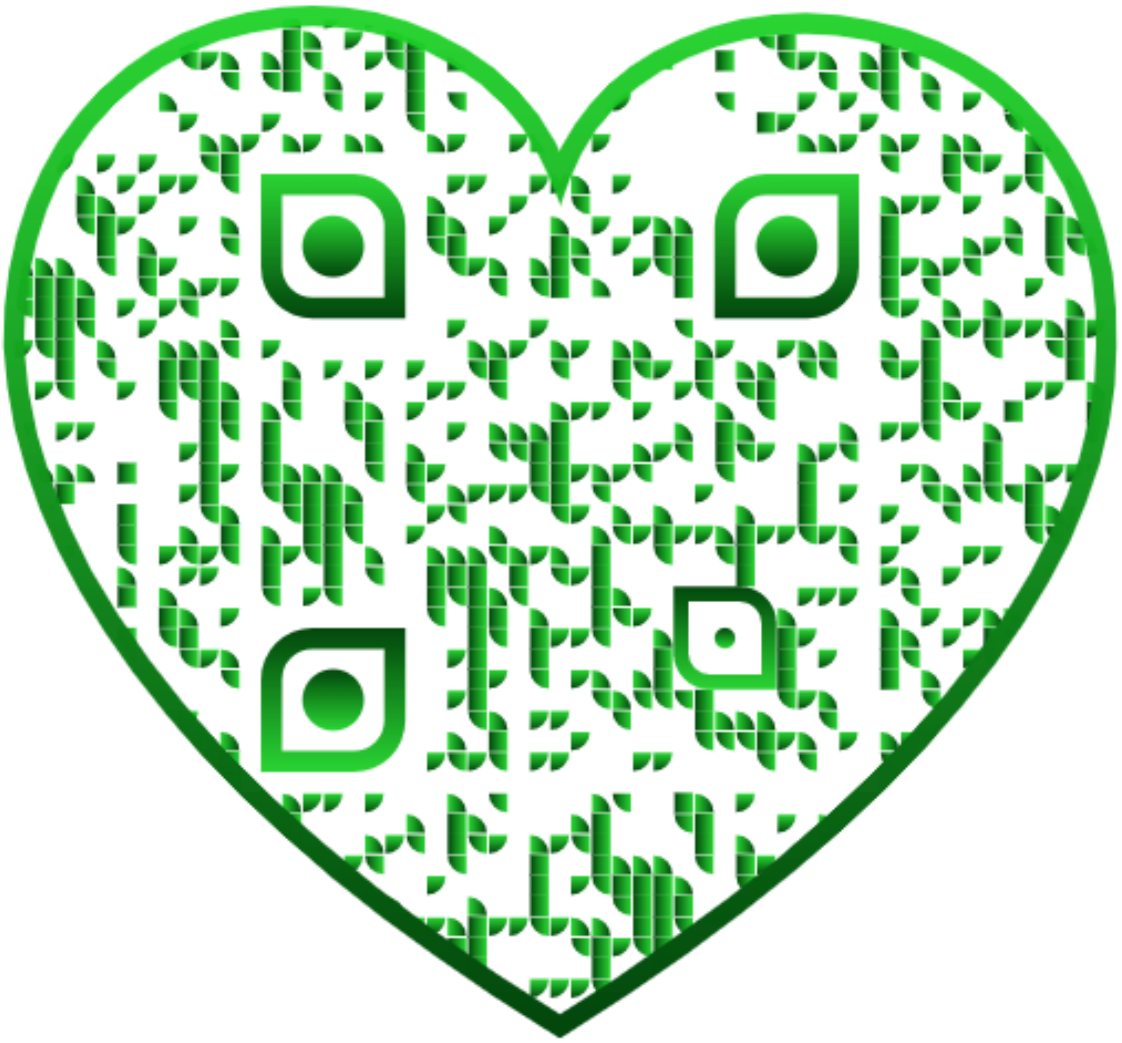

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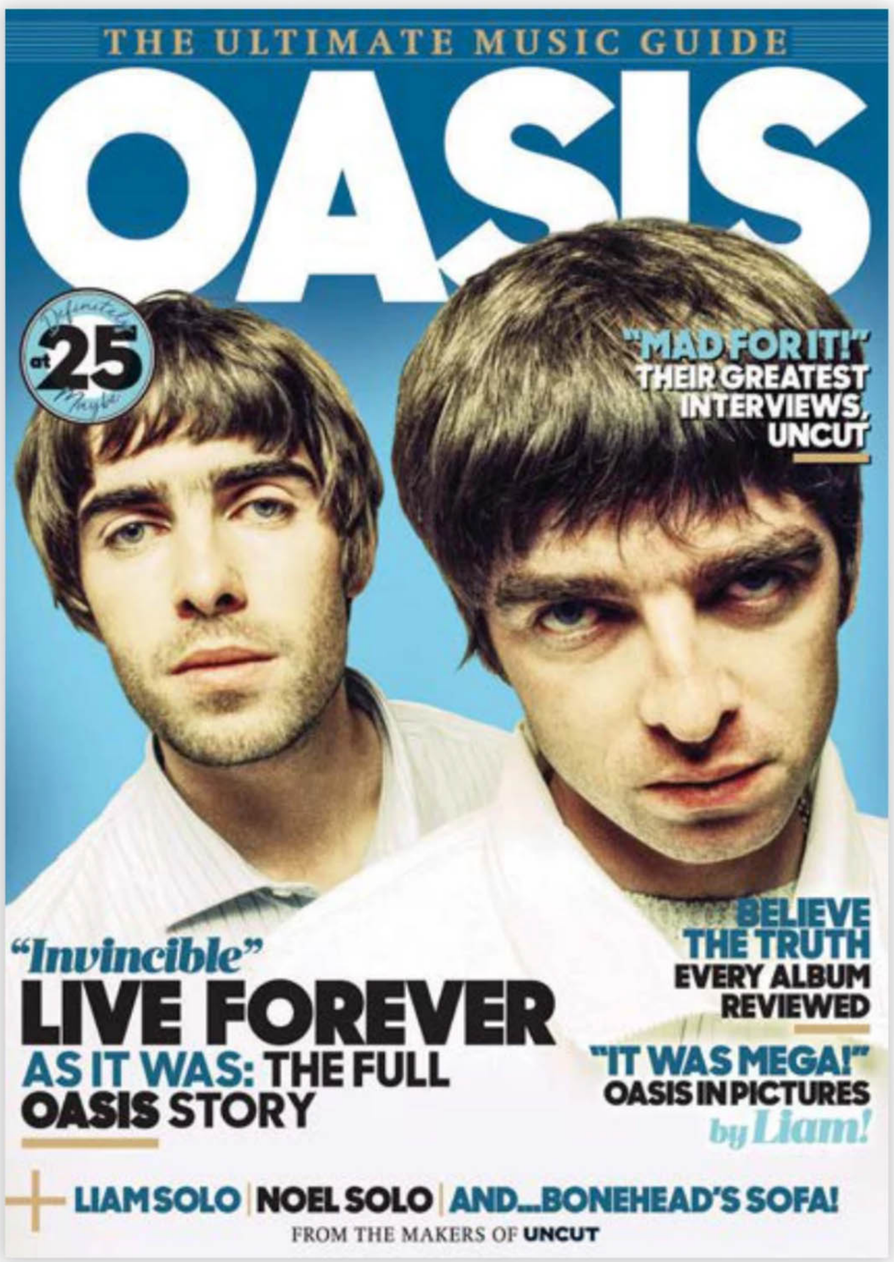

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Paul Simon and Television, backstage at CBGB, NYC, April, 1975

Welcome

From the early hits of Simon & Garfunkel, though a long and creative solo career, it's always been about new ways of working

THE broadcaster Danny Kelly recently tweeted a photo taken backstage at the legendary punk venue CBGB in 1975 or so. In the frame were a group of people you'd have reason to expect to find there (the group Television, who were then in the process of making the venue legendary, at the dawn of punk). With them, there's another person, who doesn't look like he belongs there at all – Paul Simon.

Simon, in his suede jacket, his cap and his scarf, then coming off the release of his super-mellow *Still Crazy After All These Years* album, may as well have beamed in from a more horizontal universe. But everyone seems very much at ease: in another shot in the sequence, all are smiling as Simon (we suppose) recalls an anecdote from the Village in the folk era, or relates some hard-won piece of musician's wisdom from what at this point is unbelievably his near-two decades in the business. Amazingly, at the point the picture is taken, he is only eight years older than Tom Verlaine.

Clearly Television, venerators of Bob Dylan and French literature, were musicians who saw way beyond ideology and generational dispute. But without reading too much into the image, it tells you something about Paul Simon, about his willingness to embrace new sound; and something about the esteem in which he is held. As Allan Jones notes on the meeting with him in 2011 you can read in this issue, when you think about the greatest songs ever written, and the songs of the '60s, Simon's are among those which instantly come to mind.

The story of those magnificent early songs, sung in partnership with his schoolfriend Art Garfunkel, is part of the story told in this latest *Ultimate Music Guide*, in our customary close harmony of in-depth new critical writing and characterful archive interviews. As it goes on, though, it becomes apparent that in an unshowy but utterly intransigent way, Paul Simon has been as stern in his refusal to be imprisoned by his past successes as Bob Dylan has by his. His decisions about the credit due in a creative collaboration haven't always pleased everyone, but what's continually impressive as his process evolves is his willingness to embrace new ways of working.

Whether in Jamaica with reggae session pros, with South African musicians in Johannesburg or in London with Brian Eno (who apparently sent him to the shops), Simon has shown a surprising thirst for abandoning the mode that first established his reputation. The musician who claims to be on a journey isn't exactly an endangered species, but it's certainly true of Simon, who has travelled constantly – and sometimes controversially – in pursuit of an innovative accompaniment to his free-flowing lyrical idiom, in so doing evolving an influential worldbeat of tasteful interpolation. Six decades on, Paul Simon is still writing songs – but the manner in which he arrives at them has changed, and changed back again.

> Simon has travelled constantly in search of innovative sounds to back his lyrical idiom

THIS latest *Ultimate Music Guide* comes to you now on pretty much precisely the 50th anniversary of the end of the first part of his journey: the release in January 1970 of *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. It's an event that looks likely to be otherwise unmarked by a deluxe, expanded edition (there aren't many "extra tracks" – as he says on occasion in the following pages, Simon was always relieved to have an album's worth of good songs, and never had an oversupply).

So it needs us to celebrate it in our own way. Here, Andrew Mueller praises the album for refusing to be dwarfed even by its classic title track, a secular hymn to offer consolation to all – even arty punks, presumably – who hear it. A song, in fact, which is destined to be revered "as long as songs are sung..."

Simon wasn't sure he'd be able to top it as he went solo. "People have got to compare it. It's their prerogative as an audience to stand up and boo when they don't like it," he told *NME*'s Roy Carr late in 1971, "and scream when they love it." We're lucky that in the years since, he's seldom given us cause for doing the former. ●

RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

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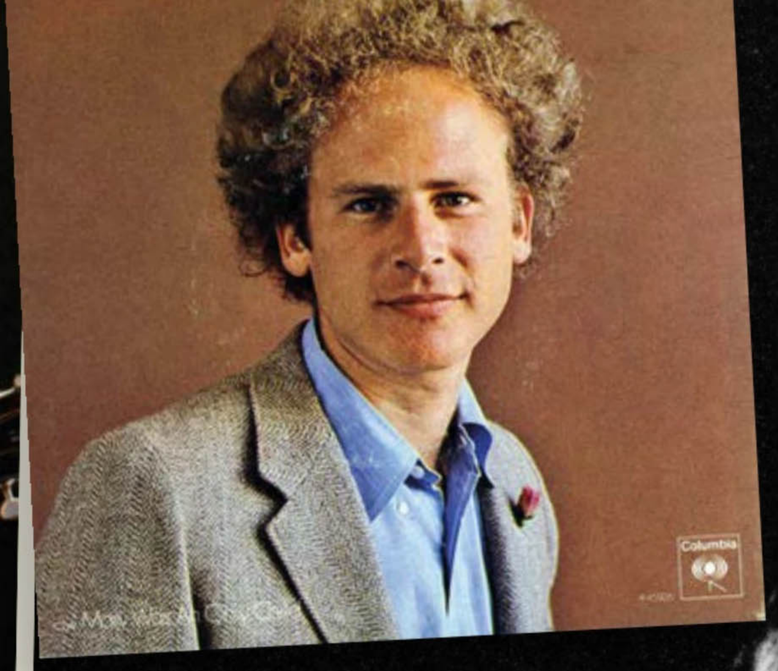
Simon performs at the North Sea Jazz Festival, Rotterdam, July 8, 2011

'Tache'll do nicely: solo Simon, 1975

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES, MARK VENEMA/WIREIMAGE



In full voice at a New York rally for George McGovern's presidential bid, 1968

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GRANGER HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

RELEASED: 19 OCTOBER | 1964

Wednesday Morning, 3am

The former Tom & Jerry harmonise on darker themes. God, murder and nuclear war: things get biblical on S&G's ill-fated debut. BY JOHN LEWIS

WEDNESDAY MORNING, 3AM is often dismissed as a piece of juvenilia from the start of their career but it was made nearly a decade after Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel started making music. They grew up three blocks from each other in Forest Hill neighbourhood of Queens, New York, met at Parsons Junior High at the age of 11 in 1953, started singing together at the age of 13, wrote songs together from the age of 14 and released their first single at the age of 16 – a jaunty bubblegum number called "Hey Schoolgirl", credited to Tom & Jerry, that reached the *Billboard* Top 50. They recorded a few more singles then, in a pattern that defined their relationship, promptly fell out, not talking to each other for five years.

So *Wednesday Morning, 3am* is something of a grudging reconciliation. By this time Paul Simon's early affections for primal rock'n'roll had been displaced by Greenwich Village's folk scene, and its spartan style fits in with early 1960s folk-revival recordings: on most tracks, the only other instrument you'll hear is the unobtrusive double bass of Bill Lee (father of director Spike). However, October 1964 was a bad time to launch a folk album. America was in thrall to Beatlemania, which had supplanted the likes of the Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul & Mary in the public imagination. Simon & Garfunkel's debut LP sold fewer than a thousand copies in its first few months of release.

The critic Ian MacDonald dismissed the album as Dylan for thickos, "a classic example of the sophomore immaturity of the American campus folk idiom of the time". But what MacDonald describes as "obligatory gospel-joyful political correctness" is actually a fascinating characteristic. Christianity was never exactly "hip" in the 1960s but there was a strain of Christian-rooted anti-materialism that chimed with both beatniks and hippies. Weirdly, it took two secular New York Jews to make this connection. One recalls Paul Simon addressing a songwriting workshop in 1970, when he advised a struggling writer to get a copy of the Bible. "It's packed with odd, memorable phrases," said Simon. "Just steal them. That's what they're for."

This is an album that explores biblical faith from a variety of angles: Civil Rights anthems; happy-clappy, born-again Evangelism; even a recitation from the Roman Catholic Mass. We start with "You Can Tell The World", a gospel anthem that dates back to the 1920s and which had been recorded by dozens of African-American artists, from Ethel Waters in 1926 to Sam Cooke & The Soul Stirrers in 1951. Simon & Garfunkel's version takes it into Everly Brothers territory, with tight vocal harmonies and a guitar riff straight out of "Wake Up Little Susie".

It's followed by "Last Night I Had The Strangest Dream", a waltz written by Ed McCurdy in 1950 and covered by hundreds since. This touchingly naïve, utopian anthem imagines a global agreement to *"put an end to war"*. It's one of several songs by contemporary folk artists: another waltz, "The Times They Are A Changin'", released only a few months earlier on the Dylan LP of the same name, has all of its rough edges sanded away and gets a glossy coating from the vocal harmonies. A similar makeover is applied to "The Sun Burns In The Sky", a grim CND anthem written in 1963 by British folk revivalist Ian Campbell (father of UB40's Robin, Duncan and Ali Campbell). The original was a slightly austere banjo-led piece, sung by sister Lorna Campbell. S& G's sugary harmonies bury lyrics like *"twisted sightless wrecks of men go groping on their knees and cry in pain"*, to the point that you'd barely guess this was about a nuclear holocaust.

Another folk standard is "Peggy-O", an old Scottish ballad of unrequited love also known as "The Bonnie Lass o' Fyvie".

Where Dylan's debut album of 1962 turned this into an eccentric, yodelling, uptempo road anthem called "Pretty Peggy-O", Simon & Garfunkel play it straight: when the narrator threatens to burn down a city if his romantic advances are refused, there's not a hint of anger in their delivery. There's a tad more passion on their version of the old Christmas spiritual "Go Tell It On The Mountain" but the most musically interesting track here is "Benedictus". This extract from a Eucharistic prayer repeats a single line ("*blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*") as a canon, with the voices weaving in and out of each other while Bill Lee's bowed bass provides further counterpoint.

PAUL SIMON would later refine his songwriting craft on the English folk scene throughout 1964 and '65, but his five original songs here show hints of the melodic and literary grace to come. "Bleecker Street" doesn't see this beatnik neighbourhood of Manhattan as a place of salvation. Instead it's a study of alienation, using biblical imagery: the fog from the East River bank shrouds the alleys where tramps sleep and "*hides the shepherd from the sheep*"; the hipster poet pays his "*sacrament*"; the church bells go unnoticed; Canaan is a long way away.

"Sparrow" is another biblical fable in the form of a nursery rhyme, about a bird who has "*travelled far and wide and cries for rest*". The fluttering urgency of Barry Kornfeld's acoustic guitar suggests flight, while the flamenco touches serve as a premonition of Simon's experiments in world music. Simon's biographer, Cornel Bonca, says it reads like a dutifully written high-school English assignment, an accusation that might also apply to the closing title track. It's told from the POV of a man looking adoringly at his partner as she sleeps, taking a sensory inventory before he leaves the house at 3am – he is on the run after robbing a liquor store and will never see his beloved again. "*Tonight will be all I have left to recall,*" he sighs, with regret. "*My life seems unreal, my crime an illusion/A scene badly written in which I must play.*"

> "The Sound Of Silence" would turn out to be the song that would save the duo from obscurity

The most personal composition is "He Was My Brother", which imagines the murder of a civil rights activist at the hands of white racists. Shortly after it was recorded, a schoolfriend of Paul Simon's, Andrew Goodman, was one of three anti-racist activists murdered by the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi. There's a rare passion to the way in which the pair spit out the lyric "*this town is gonna be your burying place*". Standing head and shoulders above the rest of the album, however, is "The Sound Of Silence". The lyrics are a little gauche but the metaphors are delivered with a grit that's lacking elsewhere. It would turn out to be the song that would save the duo from obscurity. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Wednesday Morning, 3am

1. You Can Tell The World ★★★
2. Last Night I Had The Strangest Dream ★★
3. Bleecker Street ★★★
4. Sparrow ★★
5. Benedictus ★★★★
6. The Sound Of Silence ★★★★★
7. He Was My Brother ★★★
8. Peggy-O ★★
9. Go Tell It On The Mountain ★★
10. The Sun Is Burning ★★
11. The Times They Are A-Changin' ★★
12. Wednesday Morning, 3am ★★★

Label: Columbia Records
Produced by: Tom Wilson

Recorded: Columbia Studios, New York City
Personnel: Paul Simon (vocals, acoustic guitar, banjo), Art Garfunkel (vocals), Barry Kornfeld (acoustic guitar), Bill Lee (double bass)
Highest chart position: UK 24 (on re-release in 1966); US 30

RELEASED: AUGUST | 1965

The Paul Simon Song Book

London's inclusive folk scene affords its American guest the opportunity to lay down the bones of future classics. BY JIM WIRTH

SOME time in autumn 1965, Paul Simon found his occasional London flatmate, future "Year Of The Cat" hitmaker Al Stewart, reverently playing "Desolation Row" from Bob Dylan's newly released *Highway 61 Revisited*. Nettled, the 23-year-old bawled out Stewart for falling for Dylan's beat poet schtick, this "rehashed Ferlinghetti". The teenager replied tartly that Simon would be "damned lucky" if he ever wrote anything as good. From what Stewart remembered, Simon stomped off in a rage.

Listening back to the lone album Simon had to show for his gap year in London, it's easy to see why Dylan might have been a sore spot. Released in summer 1965, *The Paul Simon Song Book* showcases Simon's most sophisticated work yet, a bundle of future Simon & Garfunkel classics mixed in with a few that (as he put it sheepishly in his sleevenotes) he "would not write today". Simon fires a few rockets in Dylan's direction on hip-talking parody "A Simple Desultory Philippic", but none hit their mark. Dylan – after all – had already moved on – *Highway 61 Revisited*'s expansive, electric sound rendered the whole thing passé within days of its release.

While Simon had walked the same Greenwich Village streets as the suede-jacketed giants of the US folk boom, the smart, middle-class kid from Queens never fit in, and may have been searching for a more welcoming environment when he first came to Europe in spring 1964, not long after the recording of the first Simon & Garfunkel LP, *Wednesday Morning, 3am*. A boho Paddington Bear, Simon was found busking on the streets of Paris by Essex folkie Dave McCausland and invited back to stay at his parents' house in Brentwood. In his weeks with the McCauslands, he was charmed to find attentive audiences for his songs in local clubs. "I remember being introduced as Paul Simon from New York, and people actually cheered," he said. After *Wednesday Morning, 3am* was released to little fanfare in the United States in October 1964, Simon abandoned a law degree after just one term to head back to England, arriving in London in January 1965, eager to feel that sense of belonging again.

The way he remembered it, the Cousins/Bunjies London club milieu that he was catapulted into was "a scene that was really worth a movie", recalling Bert Jansch, Martin Carthy, John Renbourn and the "Joan Baez-beautiful" Anne Briggs as its brightest stars. With the accent in Britain more on traditional music, good songwriters were an exotic novelty, Simon thriving on the club circuit with able support from his landlady Judith Piepe.

A collector of folky waifs and strays, Piepe's East London lodgers included – at various points – Stewart and future Fairport Convention frontwoman Sandy Denny, but Simon was accorded special attention. She hustled the BBC radio into featuring him on their god slot, *Five To Ten*, a breakthrough that led to a record deal, CBS picking up the tab for three days of no frills recording in a studio on New Bond Street. Simon duly bashed down rudimentary versions of 12 original songs, including "He Was My Brother" and "The Sound Of Silence", which he had recorded with Garfunkel on *Wednesday Morning, 3am*.

The barebones, single-mic production highlights the sophistication of Simon's best material, "Leaves That Are Green" and "A Most Peculiar Song" full of cascading melodies and clever metrical leaps, while his pretty solo version of "Kathy's Song" points toward the kind of self-consciously intelligent pop Simon would specialise in. The song's subject,

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Paul Simon is another talented young American who sings a personal kind of poetry... Doubtless Simon has his own thing going – several of the songs are worth preserving and most of them reflect a sensible point of view, but he must expect to be compared with Bob Dylan on the strength of this set."
Melody Maker, October 23, 1965

Simon's English girlfriend Kathy Chitty, plays the Suzy Rotolo role on the front cover, gazing admiringly at Simon while he fiddles with a clown doll.

It's a faintly ridiculous image, but emblematic of *The Paul Simon Song Book*'s desperate need to be taken seriously. The overwrought hammerings accorded to "I Am A Rock" and "The Sound Of Silence" rob them of their poetry, while his Civil Rights harangues, "He Was My Brother" and "A Church Is Burning" protest too much; tightly constructed, maybe, but also pious Phil Ochs by numbers.

Nonetheless, you can see where Simon is headed; the taut fingerpicking on "April Come She Will" has a chamber orchestra lustre, while the bedsit take on "Flowers Never Bend With The Rainfall" is more elegant than the overcluttered version Simon & Garfunkel recorded a couple of years later. However, that's very much against the run of play on *The Paul Simon Song Book* which, for all Simon's eloquence and command of dynamics, feels like a well-made pastiche rather than a work of conviction.

IT sold respectably enough in the UK (helped by an appearance on TV pop show *Ready Steady Go!*) but garnered nothing like the kudos that was accorded to the low-selling, self-titled album Simon produced for fellow American exile Jackson C Frank in July 1965. A glowering folk-club stalwart who had been left permanently scarred – physically and mentally – by an explosion at his school which killed several of his classmates, Frank had the authentic air Simon lacked. His bleak "Blues Run The Game" was crude compared to Simon's songs, but fellow musicians Denny, Jansch, John Renbourn and (later) Nick Drake all played it.

Simon, by contrast, was remembered by members of Britfolk's inner circle as a slightly haughty interloper (an antipathy exacerbated by accusations that he had stolen Martin Carthy's arrangement of "Scarborough Fair" without giving due credit). "I was not a keen lover of his music – or of him," said the late Bert Jansch with a scowl.

That may have been professional jealousy, though. Simon ultimately transcended the folk world, taking a Brill Building version of Dylan's wild mercury sound to a massive audience. He left the UK with no hesitation after a rocked-up revamp of "The Sound Of Silence" became a huge US hit in late 1965, reuniting with Garfunkel and abandoning *The Paul Simon Song Book* – which was not formally released in the US until the 1980s. By that time, Simon was successful enough not to worry what anyone thought of it, not Al Stewart, not even Bob Dylan. Once you've conquered Central Park, who needs Desolation Row? ●

The Paul Simon Song Book feels like a well-made pastiche rather than a work of conviction

SLEEVENOTES | The Paul Simon Song Book

1. I Am A Rock ★★★
2. Leaves That Are Green ★★★
3. A Church Is Burning ★★★
4. April Come She Will ★★★
5. The Sound of Silence ★★
6. A Most Peculiar Man ★★★
7. He Was My Brother ★★
8. Kathy's Song ★★★
9. The Side Of A Hill ★★★
10. A Simple Desultory Philippic ★★
11. Flowers Never Bend With The Rainfall ★★★★
12. Patterns ★★★

Label: CBS

Produced by: Reginald Warburton, Stanley West
Recorded at: Levy's Recording Studio, London
Personnel: Paul Simon (guitar/vocals)
Highest chart position: UK –; US –

RELEASED: 17 JANUARY | 1966

Sounds Of Silence

For all its beatsploitation intent, the pair's second locates a lonely and ambiguous tone to which millions would respond. BY WYNDHAM WALLACE

THE key to the success of Simon & Garfunkel's second album – and their success thereafter – lay buried deep within their first. An attentive label distributor named Mark Weiner had noticed that when *Wednesday Morning 3am* received an infrequent spike in sales, it was generally after "The Sounds Of Silence" had been played on the radio. Keen to exploit the potential of material that had effectively been killed by rock'n'roll, in June 1965, Columbia producer Tom Wilson pragmatically decided to use that same rock'n'roll to bring it back to life.

And the irony continued. Much as Paul Simon disdained the artist's work, it was specifically the electric folk rock of Bob Dylan's *Bringing It All Back Home* album that sowed the seeds of his own future. When guitarists Vinnie Bell and Al Gorgoni, bassist Joe Mack and drummer Bobby Gregg attended a Dylan session in June 1965, producer Wilson asked them to remain behind for extra work. Namely, to add some electric magic to the March 1964 duo recording of "Sounds...". It was an inspired decision. The song, once a folk duckling, now became a sensitive Byrdsian swan, entering the Billboard Top 50. And Simon (from London) and Garfunkel (from Columbia University) belatedly returned to the recording studio together.

Neither musician was a fan of what Wilson had done, but as an arrangement in service of the song, and an analogy for the close relationship between harmony and discord that was to define the ascent of Simon & Garfunkel, it really couldn't be bettered. With the marvels of split stereo placing the vocals on one side and the new guitar interlopers on the other, it was as if folk and rock were locked in a face-off confrontation. As the second verse got underway, these guitars – and the then best friends' folksy harmonies – were boldly interrupted by Salzman's heavily reverbed drums and Gorgoni's chiming Epiphone Casino. The irreconcilable differences at the song's heart – "*People talking without speaking/People hearing without listening*", the "*sounds of silence*" themselves – were embodied in an arrangement that was composed entirely in isolation from the original recording.

A sweet-sounding equivocation, the song very much set the tone for an album of contradictions and mild deceptions. A rush job that hangs together spectacularly well, the folk-rock sound makes Simon & Garfunkel sound fresh and new, but the songs were in fact far from that. As their record company hastily convened recording sessions in December 1965 to capitalise on the autumnal success of the single, the album was forced to make a virtue of necessity: its songs were already well established, and ripe for new treatments.

All, with the exception of "Blessed", were already available in other forms. Six tunes, for instance, could be found on the previous year's *The Paul Simon Song Book*. One was a rewrite of the title track of their debut. The legacy of Simon's sojourn on the British folk scene is also present in the inclusion on the album of the scene's instrumental staple "Anji" (basically to folk what "Wild Thing" was to rock). "Somewhere They Can't Find Me", meanwhile, is basically "Anji" electric, with words.

There's often also a subtle contradiction between sound and content. As recorded by Wilson and Columbia house producer Bob Johnston, a leonine Texan of surprising sensitivity, the songs are flavoured with the Nashville licks of the city's finest players, or take place amid a churchy hush. As peaceful or as groovy as it might all sound, the songs have much more going on beneath the surface – generally masking themes of confusion and despair. The title track makes a gentle assault

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"An arresting set of 12 tunes, varying in tempo and intensity. They brew up a good line in subdued rhythm, easy to listen to, yet gets the singers excited."
Allen Evans, NME, April 15, 1966

"Are Simon and Garfunkel on the threshold of becoming the next extension to the waning Dylan cult? This features Paul's original numbers: subtle protests against the amplifed 'commerciality' of Dylan. Interesting, entertaining."
Melody Maker, April 23, 1966

on complacency (as Art Garfunkel once put it: "the inability of people to communicate with each other"), while for the prosperous "Richard Cory" or the subject of "A Most Peculiar Man", suicide is the only way out. The closing "I Am A Rock" brings with it a conclusion which is defiant but also hopelessly lonely: "*And a rock feels no pain/And an island never cries.*"

CONCESSIONS to their earlier folky incarnation jostled for space with a more contemporary approach. On one hand, "Kathy" was a sentimental acoustic paean to Simon's girlfriend, and "April Come She Will" (the two compositions are joined at the hip, amicably) a pure-hearted ode to time's passing. On the other, "I Am A Rock" offered anthemic but bitter self-deception, the sting in its tail a match for "Richard Cory". "Leaves That Are Green" – with playful harpsichord upfront and chugging, atonal guitar in the background – afforded bucolically psychedelic shade (and proved inspirational to Billy Bragg's "A New England"). Each had been fleshed out from *The Paul Simon Song Book*. However, the rattling "Blessed" – whose caustic lyrics warned "*Blessed are the meth drinkers, pot sellers, illusion dwellers*", its cavernous production echoing Lee Hazlewood's – proved they weren't out of ideas.

It was an uneasy yet redemptive mix, one that reflected the very society that soon celebrated it. The mood was right for music reflecting complicated truths, joys waded in sorrow. In 1966, white American – and indeed international – optimism was slowly turning into scepticism, exacerbated by, among other things, civil unrest and Cold War tension. Simon & Garfunkel's impeccable harmonies camouflaged their own uncomfortable truth: months earlier, the pair had split up to live on different sides of the Atlantic. Within the record and outside it, the world was in a state of anxious flux.

The mood was right for complicated truths, joys waded in sorrow

Sounds Of Silence offered peace and turbulence, innocence and experience, with songs both charming and quietly unsettling, their observations often as trenchant as they were comforting. Had it not been eclipsed commercially by what followed, and were it not interpreted by some as an act of bandwagon-jumping, the album's reputation might be greater still. It's a sign of its times, of course, but years later it remains much more than a historical marker. A collection of finely crafted, lyrically sophisticated, stylistically adventurous songwriting, *Sounds Of Silence* reunited two superlative voices just as everything around them began falling apart. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Sounds Of Silence

1. The Sounds Of Silence ★★★★★
2. Leaves That Are Green ★★★★
3. Blessed ★★★★
4. Kathy's Song ★★★
5. Somewhere They Can't Find Me ★★★★
6. Anji (aka Angie) ★★★
7. Homeward Bound (live) ★★★★*
8. Richard Cory ★★★★
9. A Most Peculiar Man ★★★★
10. April Come She Will ★★★★
11. We've Got A Groovy Thing Goin' ★★★★
12. I Am A Rock ★★★★★

* Original UK pressings only

Label: Columbia Records
Produced by: Bob Johnston, Tom Wilson
Recorded at: CBS Studios in New York and Los Angeles; Columbia Studio A, New York
Personnel: Paul Simon (lead vocals, guitar), Art Garfunkel (lead vocals), Fred Carter Jr (guitar), Glen Campbell (guitar), Joe South (guitar), Larry Knechtel (keyboards), Joe Osborn (bass guitar), Hal Blaine (drums), Al Gorgoni* (guitar), Vinnie Bell* (guitar), Joe Mack* (bass guitar), Bobby Gregg* (drums)
*overdubs on "The Sounds Of Silence"
Highest chart position: UK 13; US 21

RELEASED: 10 OCTOBER | 1966

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme

They're a great bunch of guys. Paul Simon encapsulates the age by becoming fluent in all its languages. BY MICHAEL HANN

RALPH GLEASON had fallen hard for the music revolution of the mid-'60s. *The San Francisco Chronicle*'s jazz critic had embraced the city's underground, and though he was often accused of dismissing Los Angeles bands out of hand, he was happy to look further afield. On May 28 1966 he saw Simon & Garfunkel at Berkeley Community Theater, and was so impressed he spent the next day with them, listening to Lenny Bruce tapes. A few months later, the third Simon & Garfunkel album, *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme*, was dedicated to Bruce, and its sleevenotes took the form of a long essay by Gleason. And, goodness, did he go to town: "There are songs of alienation but there are songs of love, too, and they touch closely the prevailing philosophical current of the New Youth which is that of creativity AGAINST the machine and, thus, FOR humanity."

If Gleason's writing now reads like a parody of high-'60s Expand Your Mind It's The Teen Revolution proselytising, that's entirely fitting, because *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme* is the only album from 1966 that sounds as if it is trying to capture every strand of that period's pop culture inside half an hour. Where *Pet Sounds* was Brian Wilson refining his art into a single cohesive statement, and *Revolver* was The Beatles expanding the parameters of what a four-piece rock'n'roll band could do, *Parsley...* was Paul Simon trying to do everything at once. It has delicate folk from the English revival; it has baroque pop; it has singer-songwriter sensitivity; it has sunshine pop so groovy it actually uses the word "*groovy*" without the faintest hint of irony; it has beat music made for doing the frug to; it has a Bob Dylan pastiche so on the nose it sounds like something from *Not The Nine O'Clock News* ("*I've lost my harmonica, Albert!*"); it has what sounds like tablas, and modal guitar playing; it has social commentary and self-absorption; open-heartedness and cynicism. In all of pop history, there has probably never been a record that sounded more completely of its precise moment.

Sounds Of Silence had been a rushed job, hurried out to capitalise on the sudden success of the electrified single version of the "The Sound Of Silence". The follow-up was a more considered affair, but was not all written to order. "Homeward Bound" – a beautiful song that perhaps inadvertently invented the whole ghastly "Babe, it's lonely on the road" genre – had been recorded for *Sounds Of Silence*, but held back by Columbia because they wanted a surefire hit single for the next record (it was put on the UK version of the earlier album, though). "Flowers Never Bend With the Rainfall" had already appeared as the B-side to "I Am a Rock". What's more, "Patterns" and "A Simple Desultory Philippic" had both been recorded for the UK-only LP *The Paul Simon Song Book* the previous year. Add to that the fact that "7 O'Clock News/Silent Night" was a carol turned sound collage, and "Scarborough Fair/Canticle" drew so heavily on Martin Carthy's arrangement that royalties had to be paid. In fact, Simon wrote just six brand new songs for the record.

But that didn't matter, because *Parsley...* was a record about sound, not just songs. The budget was, for the time, colossal – it has been claimed to be $30,000 – and Simon & Garfunkel used an eight-track recorder, the finest technology available. Though the named producer was Bob Johnston, the engineer Roy Halee remembered it being very much Simon's album. "He'd play the songs first for Artie and me, and ask our opinions, and he really wanted our feedback," Halee told the writer Robert Hilburn. "Art would often be critical. Paul loved to look at things from all directions. This is also where we began to experiment with sounds, which is when he would look to me for suggestions."

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"If this new album doesn't begin to establish Paul Simon and Arthur Garfunkel as two of the most exciting, contemporary pop-folk singers in the world – nothing will. Not only as singers and instrumentalists, but also as composers and arrangers of the highest calibre... A beautifully produced gem of sound, arrangements, harmony and overwhelming depth."
Melody Maker, December 3, 1966

Simon's vision of expanding beyond soft folk for candlelit bedrooms was evident from the first tracks recorded for the album. The original of "Patterns" sounds like a demo compared to the new version: the arrangement is pretty much the same, but the additional instrumentation and Simon's delivery – no longer singing it, but attacking it – transform the song, giving it a nervous, paranoid air. The transformation in "A Simple Desultory Philippic" was even greater, given the full fuzzed-guitars-and-Hammond-organs treatment, Simon even impersonating Dylan as the song progresses, perhaps fearing no-one would have got the joke on the acoustic version from *Song Book*.

NOT everything on *Parsley...* was great, and Simon would come to disown some of it. "The Dangling Conversation" was sophomoric, an exercise less in songcraft than in looking learned, which Simon would later dismiss as adolescent. "The Big Bright Green Pleasure Machine" is a satire of consumerism so heavy handed it feels like being slapped around the head; it's like a B-side rejected by The Monkees for being a little unsubtle. "A Hazy Shade Of Winter", a single later in 1966, but not put on album until *Bookends* in 1968, was miles better than either of *Parsley*'s "rock" tracks.

But the highs! The highs are so glorious they are almost unbearable. "The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy)" is so featherlight, such a perfect summation of carefree summer mornings, that its details – the glorious harmonising on the fade, for example – are almost subsumed beneath the mood. "Scarborough Fair/Canticle" was a masterpiece of recording, arrangement and delicacy. The chassis might have been taken from Carthy, but the bodywork and upholstering performed by Simon & Garfunkel elevated it into something else entirely, as harmonies, countermelodies and harpsichord gradually overwhelmed the fingerpicked guitar. It became less a song than a reverie. The closing "7 O'Clock News/Silent Night" was a simple idea – the duo singing, then gradually being drowned out by the TV news – but devastatingly executed.

> The highs! The highs are so glorious they are almost unbearable

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme was a massive hit, and a massive hit on Paul Simon's terms – not Bob Johnston's, not Tom Wilson's, not Columbia's. Now, surely, the stage was set for something spectacular. In pop's golden year of musical, lyrical and technological breakthrough, 1967, what would Simon deliver? Not a lot, it turned out. And by the time Simon & Garfunkel returned, Simon had grown more sophisticated. *Parsley...* would be his last statement where he was audibly responding to the times and existing in them, rather than shaping his own world. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme

1. Scarborough Fair/Canticle ★★★★★
2. Patterns ★★★★
3. Cloudy ★★★
4. Homeward Bound ★★★★★
5. The Big Bright Green Pleasure Machine ★★
6. The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy) ★★★★★
7. The Dangling Conversation ★★★
8. Flowers Never Bend With The Rainfall ★★★
9. A Simple Desultory Philippic ★★
10. For Emily, Wherever I May Find Her ★★★★
11. A Poem On The Underground Wall ★★★★
12. 7 O'Clock News/Silent Night ★★★★★

Label: Columbia
Recorded at: New York City
Produced by: Bob Johnston
Personnel incl: Paul Simon (vocals, guitar, harmonica), Art Garfunkel (vocals, piano), Hal Blaine (drums), Joe South (guitar), Carol Kaye (bass), John Meszar (harpsichord), Eugene Wright (double bass)
Highest chart position: UK 13; US 4

"Very little rock'n'roll is creative"

PAUL SIMON — occasionally accompanied by **ART GARFUNKEL** — rates his experiences as UK pop's newest in-demand composer. Back home, meanwhile, their reign as stars has already begun. "Art might turn to me after a couple of concerts and say 'We earned $13,000 this weekend.' I kinda shrug and say, "That's a good two days' work!'"

NME 8/4/1966

"LIFE IS like a game. Everyone keeps trying to find out how to win. If you stopped trying to discover this, life would be nothing." The average rock'n'roll star does not give out similes like this. But then Paul Simon is not average. Simon and Garfunkel are not average.

The duo hail from New York; Paul's a writer and Art is a former architectural student.

Their intellectual prowess and less-than-consuming interest in music separate them from the "normal" performer, if there is such a thing!

When I spoke with them during a recent visit to LA, the shorter, darker, Paul Simon, insisted: "No matter how successful we are, I'll quit in a couple of years. I enjoy singing and rock'n'roll, but the main thing I want to do is write. That's what I'm living for.

"In between performances, I'm always writing, trying to develop characters, so that I can do the Great American Novel." His earnest speech ended with a chuckle at himself.

"Very little rock'n'roll is creative," he continued. "People like The Who, Bob Dylan, The Animals and some others are developing new sounds, but so many are just stagnating, recording old songs or writing something similar."

Actually Simon and his tall, blond partner Garfunkel have been singing folk music around New York and in Europe on and off for many years.

"We'd go off to school for a while, see each other again and sing together for a while. Then we'd drift apart and then get back together again," Paul explained.

"We were in England when we heard the news about 'The Sound Of Silence' hitting big in the States. Columbia Records had taken it from our first album, recorded a couple of years ago, and added the rock backing. We hurried back home as pop stars!"

Their sudden fame in America has not drastically changed the philosophical pair, nor has the screaming adulation of fans turned their heads. They offer a discerning explanation.

"They're not yelling at me," Paul commented. "They're screaming for what they think I am – some dream of what I might be."

Art broke in, "It's really a weird situation. A few weeks ago, I could walk down the street and no one would think twice. Now I'm a big star – I get mobbed. Just a hit record and wham!"

This was one of the usually quiet Art's few outbursts, but another came when I suggested that they could be termed urban folk singers.

"Why must everyone label things?" Eventually he admitted to the "urban" since their songs are about New York most of the time, and to "singer" and a half-hour later to "folk," but only under certain definitions.

Finally he professed to love rock'n'roll. "It's a lot of fun! We're trying to organise a permanent backing band. I hope we'll be able to play concerts in lots of colleges. I'm really quite excited about it!" Art, rather a studious lad, seemed surprised at his own enthusiasm.

"We certainly don't want to be called folk-rock," interjected Paul. "Dylan started something beautiful, but some guys came along and destroyed it by writing commercial songs without meaning."

TRACY THOMAS

"I'll quit in a couple of years... the main thing I want to do is write" ***Paul Simon***

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

S&G in the studio, NYC, 1967

NME 22/4/1966

THE most significant influence in popular music today, since the emergence of that well-known Lennon-McCartney firm, seems to be the mini-sized music-maker Paul Simon, who arrived on a five day private visit to England last Monday to find no less than three of his songs in the *NME* Top 20.

They are, of course, The Bachelors' "Sound Of Silence" (4), The Seekers' "Some Day One Day" (16), and the number he sings with American partner Art Garfunkel, "Homeward Bound" (15).

Six months ago anyone seen wandering around London with a copy of *The Paul Simon Song Book* album under their arm was considered a member of the "in"-crowd on the folk scene. Thanks to the efforts of men like publicist Alan McDougal, CBS press officer Roger Easterby and music publisher Alan Paramor, Paul is now a very "out" thing – everyone is falling over themselves to get a Simon song to wax.

While waiting to see Paul in Alan Paramor's Denmark Street offices Alan revealed to me that, out of the 29 Simon compositions he has, no less than 22 are being recorded!

Val Doonican seems likely to cut "I Wish You Could Be Here" for his next single. The Hollies are seriously considering the first Paul Simon single "I Am A Rock" as their next. And the Animals intend to record "Richard Cory", closely followed (or superseded as the case may be) by Them, who are interested in the same song!

The Simon half of Garfunkel puffed into the office up the four flights of stairs some 10 minutes late for our appointment.

"I used to be able to do those stairs in 7.2 seconds," he beamed shaking hands. He sat in a chair opposite and we began talking over what he really thinks about those people who record his songs.

"Let's take The Bachelors," said Paul. "I've never said that I think their version of my song is 'disgusting' as one paper reported. I don't sit in judgment over them. They've pleased an awful lot of people with that disc.

"It's a good clean version which has been heard by a great many people. Our version did not sell here [*it went to No 1 in the US*] but The Bachelors have been able to communicate my lyric to people who may never have heard it otherwise.

"In criticism all I can say is that I think it strange that The Bachelors should choose to record a very hip song when their style is so conflicting. I feel that some artists never get as much out of a song as I have put into it.

"Changes in my lyrics upset me some. The Hollies, for example, who I'm delighted to hear are interested in 'I Am A Rock,' have had to cut out the word '*womb*' from one line in case it gets banned by the BBC or someone. Anyone would think there was something dirty about the word – I never wrote a dirty lyric in my life."

Paul is naturally a little disappointed by the government ruling that because he worked for six months over here last year (in relative obscurity around the folk clubs) he cannot legally play here again with Garfunkel until July. However, America is keeping him busy.

"Art and I just play the university dates," Paul told me. "We do about three every weekend all over the States. Great audiences. Do you

"I feel that some artists never get as much out of a song as I have put into it"

Paul Simon

Simon & Garfunkel in a Columbia Records publicity still circa 1965

LGI STOCK/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES, COLUMBIA RECORDS/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

MM 30/4/1966

"I'm always being compared to Dylan but we're not talking about the same things"

PAUL SIMON SUBMITS TO THE *MM* POP THINK-IN

pop think in

BRITISH FOLK CLUBS: My favourite! I'd rather work in a British folk club than an American club. There the atmosphere is more like a nightclub with waiters and tables. At British clubs, the audiences are very attentive and open-minded. There is beautiful idealism and none of that New York cynicism. New York is a cynical town. They don't believe much. Dylan once said... forget it, I don't want to talk about Dylan.

BACHELORS: I must admit that I'm not very familiar with The Bachelors' work. I heard their record of "The Sound Of Silence" and I thought it was quite good and entertained a lot of people. I preferred our own version.

ROCK'N'ROLL: When it's good, it's very good, and when it's bad, it's lousy. Some of the best are The Rolling Stones. I never could stand the Stones until I heard "Satisfaction". When it's bad it's Gary Lewis And The Playboys. Their music doesn't mean a damn thing. It's puerile. I like The Yardbirds and The Hollies.

BOB DYLAN: Everybody asks me about Bob Dylan. Unfortunately, I'm always being compared to Bob Dylan but I don't think we are talking about the same things. Our philosophies are different. He is always dumping people more than I do. It's really easy to put somebody down. It's tougher to love than to hate. The biggest thing Dylan has got going for him is his mystique. We've met on a few occasions and he's difficult to communicate with. Artie likes him – more than I do.

GARFUNKEL: Artie. Shy and withdrawn. He seems strange to most people. I've known him since we were kids. He's very bright and sensitive and believes strongly in what he's doing. We agree on most subjects, but we disagree on some of my songs. He wants to do them and I don't because I don't believe in them any longer.

SOLDIERS: Emotionally, I'm tremendously against soldiers. Intellectually, I realise they are part of the game of international politics. I wish we didn't have to have them, particularly in America now with Vietnam. I don't know what the solution will be. They tell the American people we are there because of a moral commitment, but we are there for a strategic reason. They shouldn't say we're there to defend the Vietnamese against Communism. The people just want to live in peace, and it doesn't matter to them who it is that comes along and burns their villages.

BARRY SADLER: Oh God! His record [*Sgt Barry Sadler's "The Ballad Of The Green Berets"*] is the American "Deutschland Uber Alles". Can you imagine writing a song saying you hope your son will be a soldier and will kill people? That song has sold about two-and-a-half million, and has been the biggest hit in America for years. But I don't know anybody who knows the song after the first verse because everybody turns it off. Artie thinks the Government is behind it, but I don't think the Government are buying the records.

EWAN MACCOLL: I've never met Ewan MacColl. I should like to meet him, I suppose. He's very dedicated. I think where he goes wrong is when he makes value judgments against music. He seems to be against all contemporary writers. "The Sound Of Silence" is a commentary on life today. I don't know if he's criticised me. He might have. He's certainly written some beautiful songs. There are good and bad contemporary song writers and good and bad folk singers. Ewan MacColl is one of the good ones.

LSD: I had a whole conversation about it in an interview with an old guy recently and we spoke for about 10 minutes before I realised he was talking about pounds, shillings and pence. I thought I was in the middle of a Chekov play. LSD has tremendous potentiality. There is a definition that genius is the ability to see relationships – all kinds of relationships – that other people don't see. Scientists have expounded a theory that a chemical reaction makes for genius. LSD is a mind stimulant and if they could control it, they could create a world full of geniuses! They could cure all mental disorders. But if it is not used properly it can cause lasting damage. It's very much a subject of conversation in the United States. I know a lot of people on LSD. I don't think there is too much wrong with pot either. It's a helluva lot less harmful than booze.

GREENWICH VILLAGE: There's a lot of mythology about Greenwich Village. There are a lot of creative people in Greenwich Village and a lot of phonies. It's the Bohemian myth. Everybody comes from a town like Duluth to make the scene, and the place is filled with people from Duluth! We worked a lot in Greenwich Village. Most of the folk places have gone over to folk rock now. The Lovin' Spoonful, Mamas And The Papas, Jim McGuinn and Dylan and us all came out of folk into folk rock. I don't think it's commercialisation. It's just another way of saying what you want to say. I don't see it happening here because the tradition of folk music is much more alive in English folk clubs.

LONG HAIR: Who cares how you wear your hair? Short, long – wear it whichever way you like. I think it's stupid to grow your hair long because it's cool, but if you dig it – great.

RICH MEN: Money should be the road to freedom. Kennedy was a rich man but it didn't affect him. It's neither bad nor good to be rich. I don't think about it. It doesn't play too big a part in my life.

AFRICA: I think the regime in South Africa is an anachronism, and the situation in Rhodesia causes a lot of emotion but not a lot of thinking. I think Ian Smith was sincere and I don't think he had any choice but to do what he did [*presumably declare independence from the UK, in 1965*]. But I certainly think the African in Rhodesia should have a voice in Government, and if the Rhodesian situation develops into a situation like South Africa it will be a tragedy. People in America don't know much about it, and if you asked a man in the street what he thought, he'd probably say: "What's Rhodesia?"

ANGER: Not very often, except at myself. Most of my experience of anger is with people who are angry at us.

CASSIUS CLAY: A fine showman. Can't say I go along with his affiliations with the Black Muslims. I don't buy racial supremacy. Black supremacy or white supremacy. But I can understand blacks being so frustrated with their position as to join a group that would be violently anti-white. They had a very eloquent representative in Malcolm. It was a pity he got killed.

THE DRAFT: I'm exempt from the draft. I would have a difficult time with my conscience as to whether I would serve or not. I wouldn't know what to do.

MICK JAGGER: They tell me Mick Jagger is one of the most dynamic performers around. I'd like to see the Stones without thousands of screaming kids around. I think of Jagger as the representative of the English beat movement. He's the prototype beat singer. From "Satisfaction" on, I've listened to everything they've made. I was smashed when I heard 'Satisfaction".

JON LYONS/SHUTTERSTOCK

S&G, New York, 1966: "We refuse to do any teenage TV shows"

know how much we earned last night in a concert in America? $4,300! I just can't grasp it – it means nothing to us. Art might turn to me after a couple of concerts and say 'We earned $13,000 this weekend.' I kinda shrug and say, 'That's a good two days work!'"

In the US, where Art is still studying at university himself, it is he who receives most of the attention, being easily recognisable by his mop of unruly hair. Paul reports the fans pull Art's hair out and the buttons off his suits.

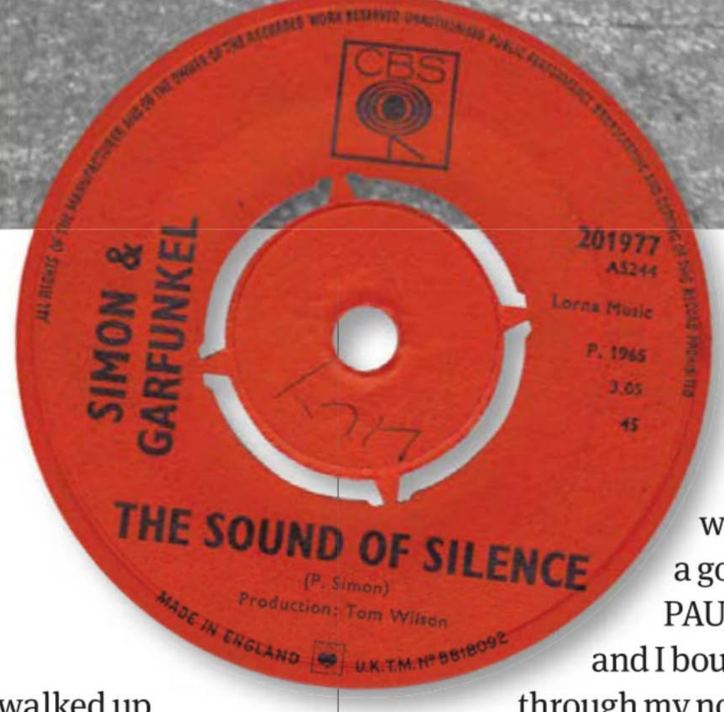
"Pretty soon he'll be the only naked, bald mathematical student around," quipped Paul.

At this point the phone rang, and Tom Springfield, proving sixth time lucky, got through to Paul.

"Great to hear from you, Tom," drawled Paul. "Say, why don't you come down to my press reception tonight. Hey, wait a minute." He leaned over to me: "Where is my press reception? I forgot again."

Before leaving the office Alan played me a demo disc by Paul and Seeker Bruce Woodley called "Cloudy", which he hoped would be the next Simon and Garfunkel single. It certainly should be someone's single.

"No, it's not Simon and Garfunkel's," said Paul, talking about them as they were some kind of fictional characters. "They'd never do it."



WE left the office and walked up Tottenham Court Road in the pouring rain, with Paul sheltering under the hood of his blue duffle coat as he eulogised about how much he loved England. In those dreadful conditions, looking for a non-existent cab back to his hotel, he either has to be very sincere or an incredible liar.

In the taxi he continued about America and how much he liked groups like Paul Revere And The Raiders, who have just made a disc called "Kicks", all about drug addiction, and The Mamas And The Papas, who have recorded "California Dreamin'".

He also related a strange conversation he had with Dylan. "At first I thought it was someone putting me on," said Paul. "This guy rang me in Greenwich Village and said he was Dylan. Conversation went as follows:

DYLAN: "I hear you went to Tahiti, and bought a gold earring?"

PAUL: "No, it was Jamaica and I bought a gold ring to put through my nose so I could follow the Village hippies!"

DYLAN: "What's the weather like in the Village?"

PAUL: "Stuffy – it's always stuffy in the Village."

DYLAN: "Yeah, well goodbye."

The caller was not a phoney but, in fact, Dylan, Paul later discovered.

Back at the hotel Paul related to me the sad saga of how he and Art were slung off *The Ed Sullivan Show* at the last minute.

"There is a barring clause which says you must not have appeared on any other national TV show three weeks before *Sullivan*," explained Paul. "We rehearsed on the Saturday, got through all the taping and that night *Shivaree* used a tape we had made for them two months ago! That meant we were off *Sullivan*. Now we refuse to do any teenage TV shows."

His next action was to play me "a number you must hear" called "Underground Wall", which is

COLUMBIA RECORDS/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

another tale of those strange beings who scribble on subway walls. If someone does a good version of it, there is another hit single.

A knock on the door announced the arrival of Paul's escort to the reception, CBS's Roger Easterby, who was greatly elated over the birth that morning of a son – Neale. Paul was almost as pleased for him as Roger himself.

"That's an experience I have to come," commented Paul shaking his head in wonder. "That must be a killer!"

KEITH ALTHAM

NME 15/7/1966

IN August, 1965, an album titled *The Paul Simon Song Book* was released by CBS featuring the composition "I Am A Rock". In September a Paul Simon single "I Am A Rock" was released and, although plugged on *Ready, Steady Go!* it sold few copies.

A month ago, teamed with his new partner, Art Garfunkel, and provided with a more commercial backing, "I Am A Rock" rode high into the American charts. As the disc had already been issued as a single – albeit an unsuccessful one – CBS decided to issue the disc three weeks ago on an EP title-tracked "I Am A Rock".

Following this little hat-trick, the recording company took a frenzied look at TV. For those of you not arithmetically minded this makes four separate discs of "I Am A Rock", all released by CBS, all sung by Paul Simon!

"I think it was a mistake," said Paul, shaking his head, when I saw him at *RSG!* last Friday. "We got split sales on the single here, and that must have affected the chart position. It did not go nearly as high as I had hoped."

We watched the new *Ready, Steady, Go!* belly dancers, dressed like something out of a naughty '90s revue, revolving their anatomies about to The Walker Brothers' new single.

"This looks like the 'Fall' out of The Rise And Fall Of The Roman Empire," smiled Paul, and we removed ourselves from the fleshpots of Wembley Park to the calm of the canteen.

Troggs Ronnie Bond and Pete Staples very nobly bought us both a cup of tea.

"Looks like you guys are going to stop me having a No 1 in the States," smiled Paul, agreeably. "I wrote 'Red Rubber Ball' for The Cyrkle, which is No 3 to your 'Wild Thing'."

Originally, Paul wrote 'Red Rubber Ball' for The Seekers, but they turned it down.

"The US went through a period of sugar and saccharine then along came The Beatles" *Paul Simon*

"The Cyrkle were previously called The Rondells, but they changed their name when Brian Epstein took them over, and John Lennon thought of the new name," said Paul. "Strange thing about 'Rubber Ball' is that when it got in the US charts right at the bottom I was mildly interested. First day it sold 5,000.

"I looked next day, and it had sold 17,000 – finally it was selling 37,000 copies a day and dwarfing our own single 'I Am A Rock', which sold 680,000."

There are a number of people in the US kicking themselves for turning down Paul Simon compositions – amongst them Chad & Jeremy, who turned down "Homeward Bound", "The Sound Of Silence" and "I Am A Rock" before Simon and Garfunkel made them.

Paul is of the opinion that the States is "now where it's all at," and the pop initiative has left Britain. "Record sales have undergone an enormous slump – particularly singles – since I was here last April," said Paul. "The Seekers had a million-seller with 'Carnival', but you can top the charts here now with a ridiculous number of copies sold.

"I think the group thing is burning out here now, too. In the US we went through a very bad period in pop music with Bobby Vee and all that kind of sugar and saccharine, but then along came The Beatles.

"Now we've caught up again. The group scene is hotting up over there – couple of great groups beginning to happen, like The Jefferson Airplane and The Grateful Dead, who are a bit like The Who.

"America is the place to go now – The Troggs would go down a storm over there at the moment." ● ***KEITH ALTHAM***

CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE

Kerb appeal: Simon has a sit down in Little Argyll Street, Soho, London 1965

RELEASED: 3 APRIL | **1968**

Bookends

Half an hour with the Wrecking Crew, visiting zoos, celebrating troubled women and staring death — and America — in the face. BY PETER WATTS

WHILE many of their contemporaries were reaching for bigger sounds and ever longer running times to articulate the themes and messages they felt their music could now express, Simon & Garfunkel went in the opposite direction. Instead of expanding a concept into a double album, they simmered and reduced, emerging with *Bookends*, a sub-30-minute treatise that explored ageing, mortality and America with the economic brilliance of an F Scott Fitzgerald novella. This process extended to individual tracks. There were none of Paul Simon's epic spiritual anthems – no "The Boxer" or "I Am A Rock" – on *Bookends*. Instead the focus was narrower, the atmosphere more conflicted. The album went to No 1 on both sides of the Atlantic, while its vision, empathy and delivery meant that Simon & Garfunkel could now be considered in the same terms as their heavyweight peers.

The scant running time conceals the effort that went into the recording. As well as enlisting Wrecking Crew session men Joe Osborn, Larry Knechtel and Hal Blaine, Simon & Garfunkel (with producer Roy Halee) embellished the album with viola, brass, strings, Moog, sound effects and spoken word. Some tracks were painstakingly worked up, such as "Punky's Dilemma", which took 50 hours of studio time, much of it on the vocal. But so light and natural is the sound that the effort only really shows through in a couple of places. "Save The Life Of My Child" and "Fakin' It" are filled with additional effects and instruments. "Fakin' It" in particular has the fuller sound of a track that's been carefully developed in the studio, a symphony of strings, sound effects and percussion reminiscent of the concise pop operas being produced by The Beach Boys and Beatles. Released as a single, the label gave its running time as 2:74 in a bid to fool disc jockeys in thrall to the three-minute rule.

"Fakin' It" was recorded in June 1967 with the aid of producer John Simon, who came on board at the label's request to assist and support Paul Simon. Columbia was concerned that he wasn't following up on *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme* quite as quickly as they would have liked, and felt John Simon would get the wheels turning. He was ultimately credited on four tracks – "Save The Life Of My Child", on which he played Moog assisted by Robert Moog himself, "Overs", "Fakin' It" and "Punky's Dilemma". John Simon then left Columbia; by the time *Bookends* came out he was working with The Band.

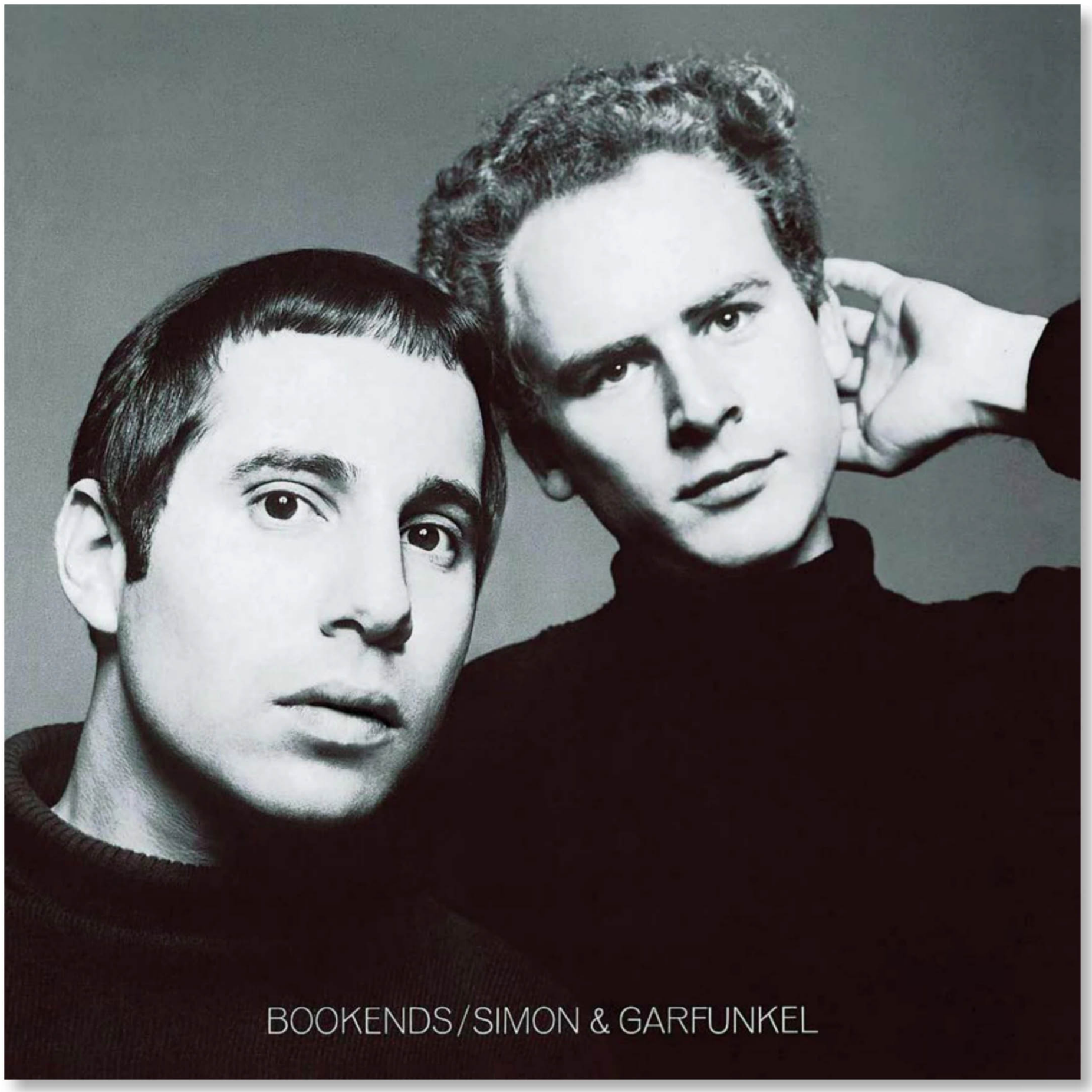
Paul Simon would ultimately take "Save The Life Of My Child" and "Overs" and work them into a themed suite of songs reflecting the arc of life from birth to death – the two extremes are represented by the "Bookends Theme". This filled Side One, while Side Two was more of a ragbag. Here were new tracks "Fakin' It" and "Punky's Dilemmas" plus three stellar singles. "A Hazy Shade Of Winter" was the oldest having been written in London in 1965. It was recorded in September 1966 during the *Parsley, Sage...* sessions and released that October as a standalone single. It's a beautiful counterpoint to "California Dreamin'" with a solid hook and rockier feel than many Simon & Garfunkel tracks thanks to the Wrecking Crew. "At The Zoo" followed in February 1967, and sees Simon wondering round Central Park Zoo identifying the different qualities of the animals like an Eric Carle children's book set to song.

The third single was "Mrs Robinson", whose driving, hooky rhythm conceals a somewhat skimpy lyric. The song had been available in two different versions on *The Graduate* OST since January 1968. Released as single in February, it went to No 1 and boosted sales of both albums. It's impossible to imagine *The Graduate* without "Mrs Robinson", but Paul Simon had originally offered a couple of other songs to Mike Nichols. One of these was "Punky's Dilemma", a strange fantasy inspired by the scene in which Dustin Hoffman floats in a swimming pool. Simon created a drifting narrator who imagines himself as

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Inspiring and descriptive music behind the tuneful singing of Simon and Garfunkel... Imaginative, if at times confusing."
Allen Evans, NME, July 18, 1968

"A thoughtful clever and well-produced album, the songs are not particularly tuneful, but S&G put them over with Beatles fervour and Beatles conviction. The words contain the strength of their work and capture part of America today, a lot of its sickness and tragedy."
Chris Welch, Melody Maker, July 20, 1968



various breakfast types before he abruptly joins the army. His other offering was the brilliant "Overs", which instead appeared halfway through the themed Side One.

Simon's desire to write to a theme was inspired by *Sgt Pepper* and *Bookends* was one of the more successful attempts at the genre. That's because he kept the narrative theme relatively simple – life itself – and instead placed any complexity in the emotional content of the lyrics. "Save The Life Of My Child" is a dramatic, Dylanesque story about a child sitting on a ledge of a building, who is watched by an increasingly frenzied crowd while the mother calls for help. Atmosphere is created by a range of effects, including an ominous Moog, distorted screams and an uninterested cop. As an allegory for the challenges facing America's youth, it's quite something and leads directly into "America", a whimsy about a young couple riding Greyhounds across the continent in search of America. Simon & Garfunkel had performed at Monterey in the middle of 1967 and *Bookends* is touched with Simon's awareness of the emerging counterculture of which "America" is the best example. It ends with what sounds like a fairground tune, as if America itself is something of a fantasy.

MANY tracks on *Bookends* sound like distilled versions of films; indeed, you can imagine the whole of Side One being filmed by someone like Hal Ashby or Nichols. The stark, serious "Overs" is like a musical take on a John Cassavetes film as the narrator smokes a cigarette and contemplates the dog end of a relationship. Simon sketches out conflicting and intertwined feelings – fate, nostalgia, regret, fear – in a handful of short lines, while a guitar flutters like smoke in the background, barely present, not wanting to intrude.

"Voices Of Old People" is an equally extraordinary concept in its way. It consists simply of old people talking, something that would have been deeply unfashionable in 1967. Art Garfunkel recorded them at the United Home For Aged Hebrews and the California Home For The Aged. It's followed by the stately lament "Old Friends", which has a bittersweet orchestral accompaniment – think Douglas Sirk – as two old friends "*sat on their park bench like bookends... silently sharing the same fears*". Both Simon and Garfunkel have talked about how much *Bookends*' ambition was inspired by *Sgt Pepper*... but "*how terribly strange to be seventy*" is about as far from "When I'm Sixty-Four" as it's possible to get. Instead, the album seems to take a lead from the gentle puzzle of "She's Leaving Home". Like so much on *Bookends*, "Old Friends" is a marvellous piece of minimalist melancholia, reflecting Simon's skill at doing so much with so little. ●

> Simon's desire to write to a theme was inspired by *Sgt Pepper*

SLEEVENOTES | Bookends

1. Bookends Theme ★★★
2. Save The Life Of My Child ★★★★
3. America ★★★★
4. Overs ★★★★★
5. Voices Of Old People ★★★
6. Old Friends ★★★★★
7. Bookends Theme (Reprise) ★★★
8. Fakin' It ★★★★
9. Punky's Dilemma ★★★★
10. Mrs Robinson ★★★★★
11. A Hazy Shade Of Winter ★★★★★
12. At The Zoo ★★★★★

Label Columbia
Produced by: Simon & Garfunkel, Roy Halee
Recorded at: Columbia Studio B & E
Personnel: Paul Simon (vocal, guitar), Art Garfunkel (vocal, tapes, percussion), Joe Osborn (bass), Larry Knechtel (piano, keyboard, bass), John Simon (synth), Hal Blaine (drums, percussion)
Highest chart position: US 1; UK 1

Leaves that are green: Art Garfunkel and Paul Simon pose for a portrait in the woods, circa 1968

"They have no idea how gigantic they are"

With **SIMON & GARFUNKEL** mania in full swing, *NME* digs out their back story. A little later, Art's own film career is making recording more complicated, but with "The Boxer" riding high in the charts, surely the pair won't split? "I'd like to come over and do some concerts," says Paul...

NME 10/8/1968

MY *NME* desk is a crowded place (I currently have plans to install it with traffic lights), but the beauty of it is that an occasional search yields up some very interesting goodies indeed. And one such piece of treasure-trove came to light this week when I reached deep into one of the drawers and found a three-year-old taped interview with Paul Simon... recorded when he was a virtual unknown who'd spent some time singing in small folk clubs around Britain.

I have a vague memory of being told that here was a name to watch, and of meeting a quiet, sensitive man with views of strength but an honest reluctance to talk about himself. I liked him. He was also a straightforward bloke with no pretensions about sitting in a pub with a beer and a sandwich.

My apologies for the delay; normally, a three-year-old interview would never even get a whiff of printers' ink on an *NME* page. But with Simon & Garfunkel's beautiful "Mrs Robinson" at No 5 and the passing of time for Paul Simon, I hope you will find his words as fascinating as an unexpected vintage bottle from the vine. I did.

I'm interested in the emotions expressed in many of your songs. Can you tell me anything about a number like "Homeward Bound"?
I used to think, you know, all the time when I was travelling on the road... about how each town blends into the next town, and how you went on each night as if you were sort of playing a game.

Really all you wanted to do was be back to where your scene was. Back to your bag... which for me, was London at the time. That's what "Homeward Bound" is about.

"I can't say that things have ever been rough for me financially"
Paul Simon

Many singers often tell of times when life was tough and they wondered where the next meal would come from. How about you?
No. I can't say things have ever been rough for me financially. I bought my guitar... I got a Martin guitar, and I got it for 80 dollars in the States... which is really cheap considering they cost somewhere around 50 quid over here, new.

All I need is somewhere to eat, and sleep, and buy guitar strings. I haven't had any real need for money. So I've made out OK.

Could you ever see yourself getting involved in a big pop scene with managers and agents and things?
I can't see that, no. I couldn't imagine myself in that scene. It's too competitive, and it's too gimmicky. I mean, this industry, this record industry, it encourages freaks.

It's a pity they push people into doing more freakish things so that they'll be noticed and go to ridiculous extremes so that it obliterates what

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

people are saying. I hope I never get to that scene where people will just be looking rather than listening. Rather than that, I'd prefer not to be known. Not at all.

So hit records don't mean anything to you, not for personal satisfaction or as a matter of ego?
Well.. I've never had a hit, although over in the States right now a song of mine called "The Sounds Of Silence" is beginning to move. So you understand, I don't know how to react to it.

The fact of the matter is, I don't even feel it at all. You see, here I am in London, and this record is supposed to be selling well. I mean, I'm not even over there and I don't know the excitement that's goin' on.

I'm here in England, and I'm goin' to folk clubs, and I'm workin' like I was workin' always. It hasn't changed me at all.

Oh, I'm happy, man. I've got to say I'm very pleased. It's a very nice gift!

Could you tell me, Paul, something about your background and the life you led before you came to this country?
Well, I'm from New York. An average sort of family, yeah. My father is a professor of English Literature at a university in New York, and... er... I went to university in New York, studied Literature, started writing short stories and such, fooling around, roamed around Europe after I got out.

I should say there's nothing particularly exceptional about me. Everybody seems to get up at some time and roam around. I did the same.

If you were asked to analyse yourself, how would you describe yourself?
[*Long pause*] Well, I'll duck the question, man.

It's a very "Dig Yourself" type question, y'know... a tendency to... I'll... I'll... I'd rather.

Anything specifically you'd like to do in the future?
Well, I would like to continue writing short stories I've been working on, and finish a novel.

I think I would get more pleasure from that than a string of hits. That wouldn't mean anything to me compared to the satisfaction of completing a novel...

What is this novel about? Is it the first one you've written?
It's the first one I've done, and it's not really anywhere near completion. See, I'm attacking it by doing short stories and, um, developing character studies in the short stories. I'm treating these themes that I treat often... Isolation. Loneliness. Communication. By developing these character studies, I'll incorporate that eventually into this novel. Illusion and reality play a large part in my writing. They are themes that mean a lot to me. ***ALAN SMITH***

TOM COPI/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

The "tremendously in demand" Simon & Garfunkel perform in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1968

NME 14/9/1968

"*THE GRADUATE*, the film that features 'Mrs Robinson', has given Simon & Garfunkel the kind of status in America that The Beatles have now," their music publisher, Alan Paramour, explained to me, following a recent visit to see the duo in New York. "They really became enormous after the release of 'Giant Green Pleasure Machine', but now have no idea how gigantic they are.

"The greatest bulk of their following, undoubtedly comes from the student factions who absolutely idolise them and most of the boys' bookings now are on the college circuits.

"They are working two or three times a week and are tremendously in demand for TV and film work. This is really one of the greatest difficulties from Paul's point of view, because he must find time to compose.

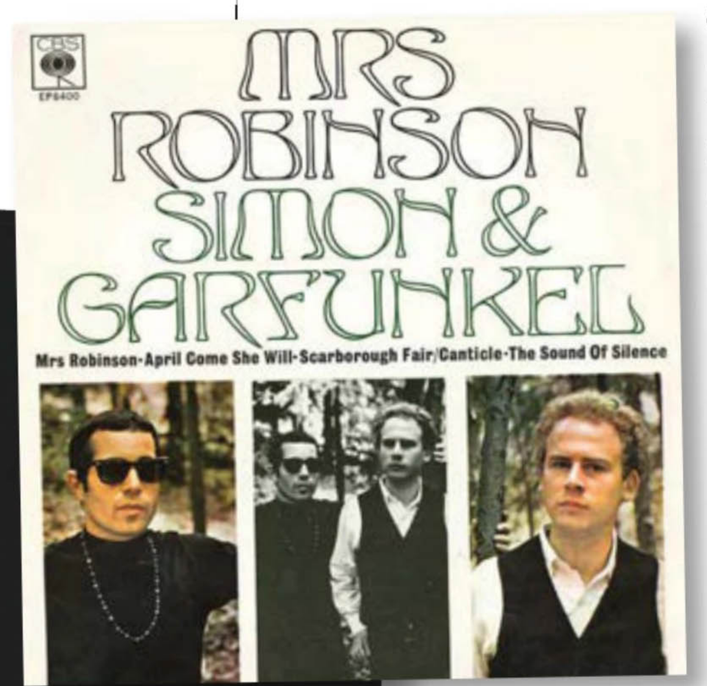
"The reason that *Bookends* had one side of the album made up of previously released singles was simply that he has just not had the time to write new material. He's not the kind of writer that can force ideas.

"Time is really now the all important factor – time to be able to return to England, which they very much want to, but with all their other commitments and Art still at college, there is no chance until next March. Art is now sitting for his Bachelor of Science degree and I believe that Paul now has his BA."

While in New York Alan has been talking with their US manager Mort Lewis, who demonstrated their present status by showing Alan a letter from Senator Hubert Humphrey inviting the boys to join the Democratic campaign and assist in Humphrey's promotional activities. Paul is, in fact, a very politically aware person whose attitude might be best described as "anti-kill".

I asked Alan if he could elaborate on some of the more obscure references to "*joltin' Joe Di Maggio*" on "Mrs Robinson" and the puzzling finish to "Save The Life Of My Child", when the boy flies away from the window sill where he was preparing to leap to his death.

"I've no idea what '*joltin'*" refers to," admitted Alan. "But Joe Di Maggio was



a baseball idol in America, who stepped out of category of sheer sportsman to become a national idol. Everyone loved him. The pleas of '*where have you gone Joe Di Maggio*' is obviously a plea for someone who the youngsters can believe and love like that again.

"The reference to the boy who flies away I would say was an oblique reference to drugs.

"Paul worked very closely with a social worker Judith Piepe while staying in England and is very much aware of the danger to young people from drugs. 'Bad News Feeling' which he wrote is a song about the addicts and 'Most Peculiar Man' was another about a suicide.

"Paul has an incredible sympathy for understanding people not necessarily in his own age group. The song about the old folk, 'Bookends', for example, on the album, shows a perception well in advance of his years.

"That whole album side is really the story of birth to death, if you listen to the progression of the tracks which take you through the stages of life."

"Simon & Garfunkel have mushroomed into the proportions of pop giants now and it looks as though it is happening here as well."

KEITH ALTHAM

NME 24/5/1969

"THE Boxer" took more than a hundred hours to record and five months to release! Art Garfunkel is alive and well and filming in Rome! Paul Simon is anxious to play concerts in Britain! And the prize-winning duo are definitely NOT splitting!

These are just some of the subjects Paul Simon touched upon when I called him at his New York home to tell him about the success of "The Boxer" and to get up to date on the Simon & Garfunkel scene.

He was naturally pleased about the progress of the new single, not realising quite how high it had reached in the *NME* in just three weeks.

"It was an experiment," he revealed. "We wanted to record a Christmas album in a church, so we went into one to get the feel and to listen to the sound of the acoustics.

"It was written last summer and finished in December. It was recorded all over the place – the basic tracks in Nashville, the end voices in New York St Paul's Church, the strings in New York Columbia studio, and voices there too. And the horns in the church."

Simon's & Garfunkel's last hit was, of course, "Mrs Robinson", which recently won a Grammy award. The rush to record it is still on, but there's one act I wouldn't have thought would have been interested in "Mrs Robinson" who, in fact, are.

"Booker T & The MG's have just recorded it," Paul revealed. "It's their next single. I was just in Memphis with them. They do a great job, very, very funky."

That should be a record worth hearing! With "Time Is Tight" progressing up the chart and such a strong number as a follow-up, this could be the consolidation of a healthy hit period for Booker.

"Paul is very much aware of the danger to young people from drugs"

Alan Paramour

Of the Grammy award, Paul commented: "I didn't expect it. I thought 'Hey Jude' was the record of the year. I watched the presentation on television. Art went down and accepted it."

While Paul is busy writing, Art is playing the part of Nately in the film version of *Catch-22*, which is currently on location in sunny Italy.

"We'll have to wait 'til he gets back before we can do any appearances," Paul pointed out. "The film started in January, which was part of the reason there was such a delay in the record being issued. Shooting ends in June, then it'll take a year to edit.

"Why that long? It's costing 11 million dollars to make. It's a very big movie. It should be released around summer next year."

So as Art's acting commitment will not delay concerts much longer, what are the chances of Simon & Garfunkel coming over for some shows?

"I'd like to come over in the fall and do some concerts," was Paul's statement. This should please a lot of people, specially since the split rumours have started circulating. "We've done none since November and have no plans to do any for the time being.

"I'd like to do the Albert Hall and Scotland. We've only been to Scotland twice and I liked it; the audiences are very responsive."

Paul takes a strong interest in the current music scene and wanted to know what was happening in England. When I told him about the country-and-western boost, he replied: "That's good, there's a strong interest in country music here, too. It's better than psychedelic music.

"I was glad to see Desmond Dekker make it. I bought a couple of albums by him in Jamaica and 'The Israelites' was on one. I liked it and said to Art: 'Listen to this cut, isn't that good.'"

Paul reported that Graham Nash's new interest – Nash, Crosby, Stills – has a unique sound and it already booked out for huge money even though they haven't appeared yet.

"I'm glad that Graham's departure hasn't hurt The Hollies," Paul added.

There are enough Simon & Garfunkel tracks in the can for a new album, but again its release is being delayed while Art is becoming a movie star. And that is another entry for the not-to-be-missed file! ● ***RICHARD GREEN***

The Art of war: Garfunkel with Alan Arkin in a scene from the 1970 black comedy *Catch-22*

PARAMOUNT/GETTY IMAGES

RELEASED: 26 JANUARY | 1970

Bridge Over Troubled Water

Going out on a high, Simon & Garfunkel's turbulent swansong more than matched up to its colossal title track. BY ANDREW MUELLER

On other albums, people might have forgotten there were other songs. The title track of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was sufficiently colossal to overwhelm not just any given long-playing record, but most careers. Paul Simon wrote it one night sometime in early 1969, in his apartment in New York City. Buzzing around in his head were a couple of albums he'd been listening to a lot: The Everly Brothers' 1958 gospel and traditionals collection *Songs Our Daddy Taught Us*, and a record by venerable gospel group The Swan Silvertones. In the latter's version of "Mary Don't You Weep", Silvertones lead vocalist Claude Jeter yelped the improvised declaration, *"I'll be your bridge over deep water/If you trust in my name."*

The long list of the vocalists who've taken a crack at "Bridge Over Troubled Water" in the half-century since includes Elvis Presley, Glen Campbell, Aretha Franklin, The Jackson 5, Johnny Cash, The Supremes, Buck Owens and Peggy Lee. It is tough to argue that any of them did a better job than Art Garfunkel – although, in a stand-off which said much about the reasons why this was Simon and Garfunkel's final studio album together, Garfunkel didn't want to sing it. He thought it suited Simon's voice better, but Simon insisted – and then, by his own later admission, took to seething at the side of the stage as Garfunkel bathed in the applause for what Simon had written. (Just as inevitably, Garfunkel has disputed this recollection.)

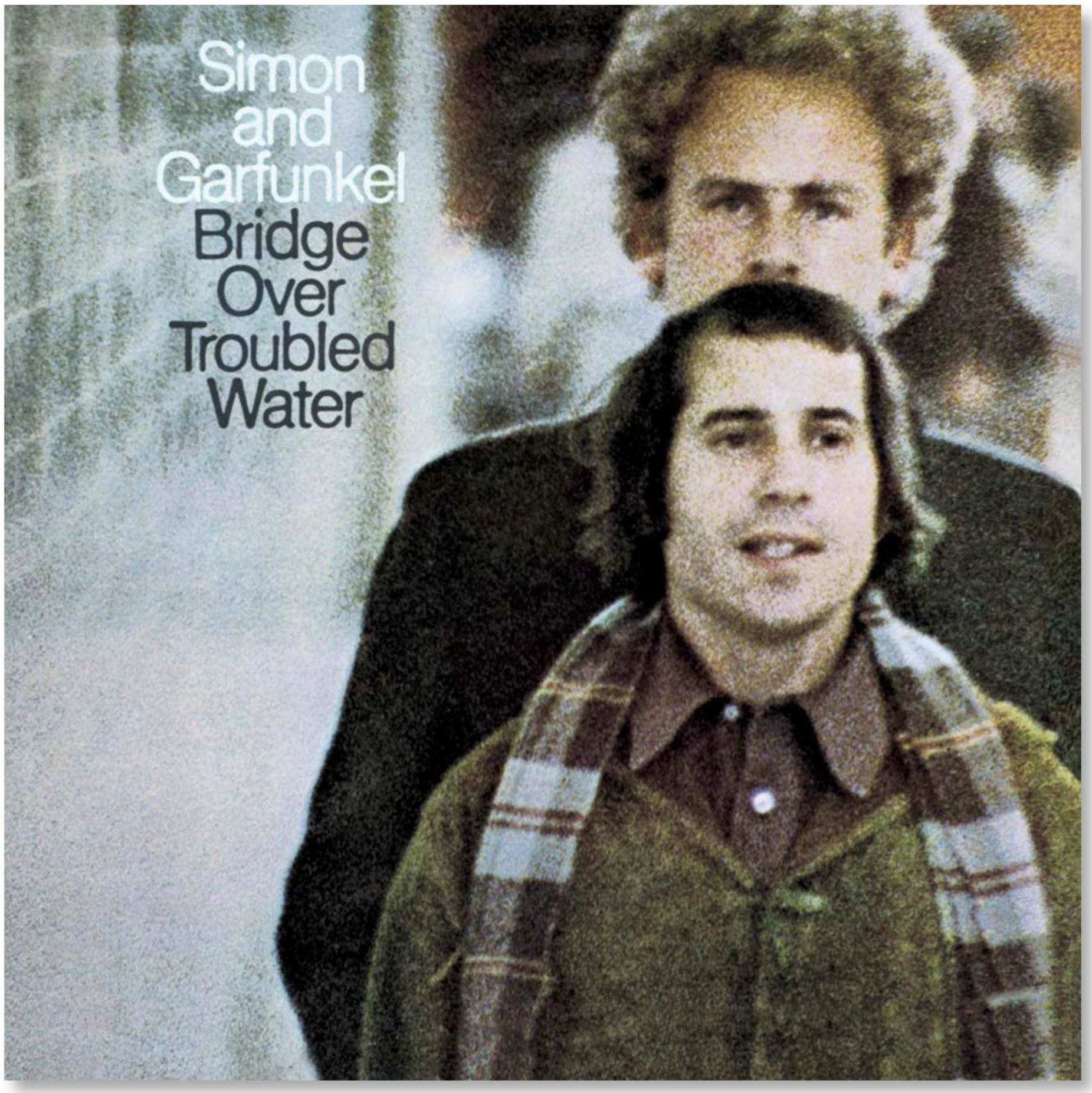
It was, all things considered, quite the swagger to rack up something so obviously monumental as "Bridge Over Troubled Water" as track one, side one – but this confidence, if confidence it was, was far from misplaced. "Bridge Over Troubled Water" (the song) became an immortal standard the second Paul Simon finished writing it, but it's not even the best song on *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (the album). "The Boxer" – track one of side two – may be Paul Simon's finest few minutes. The melody is a perfect, plaintive folk lament, the lyric a gentle yet devastating negotiation of the tightrope between determination and delusion, as the titular palooka struggles to persuade himself that his shot at the title, though unbearably delayed, might still await (*"A man hears what he wants to hear/And disregards the rest,"* is as terse a summary of the human condition as has been rattled off in one couplet outside Shakespeare). However, the recording of "The Boxer" on *Bridge...* is dreadful. This fragile and delicate song is beleaguered by ludicrous reverbed drums and plagued by a droning bass harmonica: trying to enjoy the original "The Boxer" is like trying to sleep in a tent with a rock festival outside it, and a mosquito inside it. Later and subtler live versions, adding a reflective – if not quite redemptive – final verse, were vastly superior.

Both sides of *Bridge Over Troubled Water* were, almost by definition, comedowns from the peaks which opened them. The needle was obliged to hack its way through some disappointments, but none of them major. "El Cóndor Pasa (If I Could)", adapted from a melody by Peruvian composer Daniel Alomía Robles and fleshed out by the pipes and traditional guitars of Los Incas, is sweet enough, but veers somewhat towards outright nursery rhyme. "So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright" might have been conceived by a Paul Simon song title generator, and is a misjudged swipe at Glen Campbell-ish grandeur which somehow gets to near four minutes without sounding like it has started. A live take of "Bye Bye Love", which Simon & Garfunkel had adopted in homage to their obvious inspirations The Everly Brothers, is no hardship, but the tinny quality of the recording rather jars with the rest of the album.

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"This long awaited follow-up to the beautiful *Bookends* is due for massive sales, many plays and much discussion. I have no hesitation in recommending this very fine LP."
Allen Evans, NME, February 28, 1970

"Title track, already a hit single, is the best number, but Simon's fragile charm ensures that it's almost all worthwhile. The use of rock techniques is particularly responsible and intelligent."
Melody Maker, March 7, 1970



The fact that Simon and Garfunkel split just months after the release of *Bridge...* has endowed the album with an amount of elegiac baggage it doesn't really deserve. If one was not wise after the event, one could mistake quite a lot of it for the sound of people having a whale of a time – or maybe, given Simon's essential brooding seriousness, he saw the breakup coming and was somewhat demob-happy. Whatever, the LP contains some of his most outright playful compositions. "Cecilia" is a giddy, glee-struck shuffle which can be read as a devotional to some eponymous paramour or (not implausibly) to the patron saint of musicians who shares the name. "Keep The Customer Satisfied" is a breezy, brassy and utterly irresistible romp which charms its way around the ill-earned self-pity of the touring musician. "Baby Driver" has something of the psychedelic dementia of those moments The Beatles would dip into Americana. *"My daddy was a prominent frogman/My mama's in the Naval reserve"* – it's kind of Simon's "Rocky Raccoon".

A consensus has developed that *Bridge Over Troubled Water* did contain one portent of the looming sundering: the gorgeous "The Only Living Boy In New York", sulked by Simon in a fug of resentful loneliness as Garfunkel swanned south to Mexico to play Lieutenant Edward Nately in Mike Nichols' film of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. "The films", in Simon's telling, are always at the root of the duo's split. It's also possible to hear the slight shimmy "Why Don't You Write Me?" as an answer song written by Simon for Garfunkel, laden with references to long, hot days waiting by the mailbox in some humid jungle, wolfing iodine tablets and wishing for death, though perhaps this was Simon trying to assure himself that shooting a film with Orson Welles, Bob Newhart and Martin Sheen could really be that little fun. But in general, purchasers of *Bridge Over Troubled Water* were left oblivious that they were enjoying the terminal throes of Simon and Garfunkel's astonishing partnership.

> "Bridge Over Troubled Water" is not even the best song on the album

Neither Paul Simon nor Art Garfunkel had turned 30 when they released one of the best-selling records of all time (25 million units shifted), and their last studio album together (a few sporadic and uneasy performing reunions lay ahead). As a capstone of what the pair accomplished, it is solid, with frequent flights of magnificence, and features two of the songs which all Simon's future audiences would most want to hear – and one of which, its title track, people seem likely to sing as long as songs are sung. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Bridge Over Troubled Water

1. Bridge Over Troubled Water ★★★★★
2. El Cóndor Pasa (If I Could) ★★★
3. Cecilia ★★★★
4. Keep The Customer Satisfied ★★★★
5. So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright ★★★
6. The Boxer ★★★
7. Baby Driver ★★★★
8. The Only Living Boy In New York ★★★★
9. Why Don't You Write Me ★★★
10. Bye Bye Love ★★★
11. Song For The Asking ★★★

Label: Columbia
Producer: Paul Simon, Art Garfunkel, Roy Halee
Recorded: Columbia Studios, New York City, CBS Columbia Square, Los Angeles
Personnel: Paul Simon (vocals, guitar, percussion), Art Garfunkel (vocals, percussion), Fred Carter Jr (guitars), Joe Osborn (bass), Larry Knechtel (keyboards), Pete Drake (dobro, pedal steel), Hal Blaine (drums, percussion), Jimmie Haskell (strings), Ernie Freeman (strings), Buddy Harman (percussion), Charlie McCoy (bass harmonica), Bob Moore (upright bass), Jon Faddis (brass), Randy Brecker (brass), Lew Soloff (brass), Alan Rubin (brass), Los Incas (Peruvian instruments)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 1

"I was bored with what I was doing"

PAUL SIMON strikes out solo. He lectures, ponders his next musical moves and indulges in studio perfectionism, pausing briefly to solve the mystery of "The Boxer" in conversation with ROY CARR. "I've never written anything about Dylan..."

NME 25/12/1971

PAUL SIMON, poet-musician-singer, is one of the greatest imaginative talents of this century. His association with Art Garfunkel, which by his own admission has now been dissolved, was responsible for not only selling millions of records but preserving for posterity some of the most beautiful and pastoral popular music which, like the writings of his contemporaries, Dylan, Lennon and McCartney, laid down the foundation for a generation's music.

As a writer, it has been a personal ambition of mine to interview Simon. I have written about him at length prior to our meeting. It has pleased him. He quoted the concluding paragraph of my last feature in which I documented the events which have led up to him being incommunicado for close on two years... "So as long as Paul Simon chooses to cloak his activities in an aura of mystique – misleading rumours will persist."

Today, on my bookshelf is a handsome leather-bound limited edition of the complete works of Paul Simon, which is inscribed... "To Roy, Simon steps out from behind his veil of secrecy, Paul Simon".

In the quiet of his Grosvenor House suite – acoustic guitars resting on chairs – a classical score open on a table – Paul Simon, a slight but stocky figure in washed-out Levi's and a pullover, relaxed and, as we talked, stepped out from behind his veil of secrecy...

Could you clarify what in fact has happened to the Simon & Garfunkel partnership?
Sure, I'd be glad to. As I stand right now, I have no partnership with Artie. That means, I don't feel that Artie Garfunkel is my partner... He's my friend, but I don't have a partner. I see Artie; in fact I saw him a couple of days ago.

"I don't feel that Artie is my partner... He's my friend, but I don't have a partner"
Paul Simon

Does this mean that you'll never record together again?
It's not outside the realms of possibility that I'll record with him again... or that Artie will want to record with me... It's possible. But we don't make plans together as a duo any longer.

Was the split premeditated, in that you planned the *Bridge Over Troubled Water* album as a final statement prior to dissolving your partnership?
[*Somewhat indecisive*] Well, actually, we did at that time. You see it was a combination of the *Bridge*... album, *Catch-22*, *Carnal Knowledge*... just a lot of things that were going in different directions. We both had different interests. What I think we actually said was something to the effect of, we'll finish the *Bridge Over Troubled Water* album and that will be it. We didn't plan to do anything together after that. I planned that I would go and do an album by myself and Artie would work on the movie *Carnal Knowledge*.

Was this how your partnership with Artie always operated?
No, it was a regular, standard group. And like all groups that were groups and eventually break up, Simon & Garfunkel was a group and it broke up.

Was it amicable, then?
Yes, and those were the circumstances. It was no more, no less. He's still my friend and I still see him, but we haven't sung together in nearly two years.

Do you miss him?
You mean musically? Well, at first, when I

GEMS/REDFERNS

"You have the advantage of never having any conflicts": solo Simon with man's best friend, early '70s

started to work, I found it very strange for the simple reason that I was so used to working within this relationship. After a short while as I grew accustomed to doing things by myself it became very easy and very pleasant. You have the disadvantage of not having someone's ideas which are very bright and creative and then you have the advantage of never having any conflicts, so that whatever you want to do, you can go ahead and do it.

When you were with Artie, did you exchange ideas concerning the treatment of your songs?
Yes, we did.

Well then, when you started writing and recording the material for your new solo album, did you miss having Artie around to bounce ideas off?
There are still plenty of people around for me to bounce ideas off. After the initial period of awkwardness that I encountered when I started doing this by myself, we eventually got around to talking about it. I would say, I'm going to do this track here; they would say that's a single, that would be great with background voices here. There's no problem about bouncing ideas... I've plenty of people always around me.

So what in fact have you been doing in the period since you terminated your working partnership with Artie?
You mean professionally speaking? What have I been doing over the last 18 months?

Yes. You see, I also heard tell you've been teaching at a university.
That's true. I taught for a short while – a year or so ago. In fact it will be two years this coming spring – at New York University. I taught a class in songwriting and record making for just one semester. I had a good time and so did everybody else, and that was the end of the class. I didn't go back in the fall because I was busy working on my album. After that period of teaching, I leisurely put together this album which is about to come out in early January, and that's pretty much what I was doing as far as my music was concerned.

What will the album be called?
It will be called just *Paul Simon*.

How many songs are there on the album?
Eleven. At this time there's not much I can say about the album because I've yet to hear the final acetates – they should have been here today – so it's difficult talking about something you're not listening to.

Fair enough. Well then, can you tell me is the album in the form of any particular concept, or does it just comprise 11 assorted songs that you have written?
By concept I gather you mean that it begins and ends with relating themes.

Yes, more or less.
I don't think so. [*Pauses and rethinks over that last statement and continues*] Possibly... probably... but I didn't write it that way. But when you've got an album of songs written by one artist there must be some undercurrent of relativity passing through it.

Are you completely satisfied in the way it has turned out?
I am. I'm very pleased and very happy with it.

I gather that you have produced the new album yourself.
In conjunction with Roy Halee, who has been our engineer all the while.

With the release of your album imminent, have you made any plans to do some personal appearances?
I might... In fact I'm just thinking about it right now. This might just be the time to do it.

Have you ever felt trapped by your own success?
I never felt trapped by my own success; I always knew that I could stop performing or stop doing this or that. It's not a question of being trapped, just that you're trying to find something interesting and something that engages you, and which in turn gives you a feeling of purpose. The more successful you get, the less feeling of purpose you have. When you have a purpose you are working for a future reward... if you know what I mean... If only I could play guitar like Eric Clapton... or if only I could take a solo like George Harrison, something like that. Then you work and you work and then you can take a solo... so now what do you play? Now what?

Have you been able to avoid the pressures that arrive with success?
[*Frowns*] That's a big question and a very hard one.

The syndrome which tends to envelop so many artists which, if it doesn't result in self-destruction, degenerates into a situation where personal hang-ups overshadow the music. How often has an artist who has worked and achieved everything publicly admitted to still being unhappy?

"Once you succeed, people rightly feel they have the right to judge what you did"
Paul Simon

Well, I suppose you're always happy struggling. You're working hard at something and you feel that you're going to succeed; everyone is encouraging you and wishing you well. Once you succeed, then people quite rightly feel that they have the right to judge what you did because you're holding yourself out as an artist, and now they'll say that I don't particularly like what this group did. Whereas, when they were playing in the local club and were the greatest thing that ever came through Madison, Wisconsin... well, that's always another story.

Do you feel that with success people expect too much to the point that they are only too eager to knock and put the artist or group down?
People love to criticise. Take away people's right of criticism and you'll take a lot of joy out of the world. People love to criticise and speculate. That's all right... that's fine.

But there's always that situation where an artist might give a few bad performances, but managers and close friends are so closely involved that they will continue to say it's great. Thus, the artist is faced with a predicament whereby he may doubt his ability and be unsure as to whether his performance is good or bad.
What I feel is that you generate your own pressures and your own standards. I have my own standard for when I think I've done something well. If I achieve it, then it would be hard to shake it if somebody said it was bad. If you believe in it, that's fine, but if you don't believe in it, then it's pretty hard for others to get into it.

When you and Artie were performing, did you ever encounter the situation when you became in any way apprehensive about making personal appearances?
No, because you have to figure that everybody out there has come to see you, they want to see you, and if they didn't they wouldn't be there. Therefore, you have to assume that they are not hostile towards you. As far as records are concerned, people are always making comparisons. When I put out this new album, it's inevitable that people have got to compare it to when I sang with Artie and to what I wrote on the *Bridge Over Troubled Water* album. So what? It doesn't matter. It's their prerogative as an audience to stand up and boo when they don't like it and scream when they love it.

Is there a backlog of unreleased Simon & Garfunkel material in existence?
Not too much. There might be one or two things... maybe three, but I'd say there's nothing of any value. However, there is a lot of live stuff because we recorded a lot of our concerts that we never released.

Enough for another and perhaps final Simon & Garfunkel album?
Yes, there's some. I believe that Columbia is going to release a Greatest Hits album.

A live one?
Partly live. Could be that they'll use the live performances we have of "Homeward Bound", "For Emily", "Feeling Groovy"... It's going to be a single album, but it's going to have somewhere between 13 and 15 tracks.

At one time there was a rumour that both you and Artie had recorded a Christmas album.
We did record some things in a church, but we never recorded a Christmas album in a church. There's no evidence on tape, though I still remember some of the songs that we were going to record.

S&G clean up at the Grammys, Hollywood Palladium, LA, March 16, 1971

NME | 1/1/1972

ON the Simon & Garfunkel albums there's always been intricate yet unobtrusive orchestral and group backings. Yet you've always chosen to undertake live appearances with just the two voices, your guitar and the occasional extra musician in support. What was your motive for this?

At one point, we did use some back-up musicians, but most of the time we didn't because it seemed to make things better just using the two of us. First of all, we'd require a lot of time and rehearsal. The guys we used on the records we couldn't take on the road because they were all very busy session men. If you said to guys like Larry or Hal, would you come out, they'd do it as a favour. But if you said we're going on the road for three months they'd decline.

They've got families, their work and besides it seemed to work with just the two voices and the one guitar. There was something about it, the fact that it was reduced to such a small trio band... two voices and a guitar that worked. Those numbers that didn't work, we didn't do, so I don't think that you felt it, by not doing things that couldn't be sustained within this simple context. If we had, then I'm sure you would have felt it... but we didn't. Until *Bridge*... came along everything was easy to do that way. It's so simple to go and perform that way. Sound problems were pretty much eliminated; even the Royal Albert Hall – which acoustically is supposed to be terrible – was, for us, just great.

So there isn't a chance that you might suffer from the same predicament as Dylan, whereby a flood of unheard material is made available in bootleg form. I know there's one album called 'Chez' which is supposed to feature both you and Artie singing and talking in a room.

I haven't heard that one, but there's a lot of Dylan stuff about and there's a lot of Simon & Garfunkel bootlegs of concerts. But the most flagrant bootlegging that's being done, doesn't revolve around unreleased material; it's done by those people who take the album and copy it, then resell it on tape cassettes and cartridges. These bootleggers make their money by selling it to the record dealers for much less than the actual record companies. That's where the big bootleg market is – it's so much bigger than the bootlegging of discs. I mean there's a Simon & Garfunkel Greatest Hits tape that's a best seller. You can't con people into believing that somebody really bad is really dripping with talent. An artist wants to be good. He wants to please and finally succeed. If you're around long enough, then you don't believe in everything that everyone tells you.

Is that hunger and that determination to succeed still as strong today as when you and Artie were working the folk club circuit?

Well, the people that surround me, like my wife and everybody else, are always saying, "That's not as good as that one", or "Why not change that line in that song?"

You have this reputation of being very meticulous when working in the recording studio to the point of continually striving for complete perfection. In fact, Duck Dunn recently told me that when he recorded with you for the new album, that you'd lay down a take – everyone would like it – but that you would insisted on redoing it over and over again until you were satisfied that you had captured a certain mood.

[*Smiles as he remembers the event*] Well, I used Duck on bass and I used Jim Keltner on drums. We just came into San Francisco and started to work on one song which actually was never finished. I was looking for something, but

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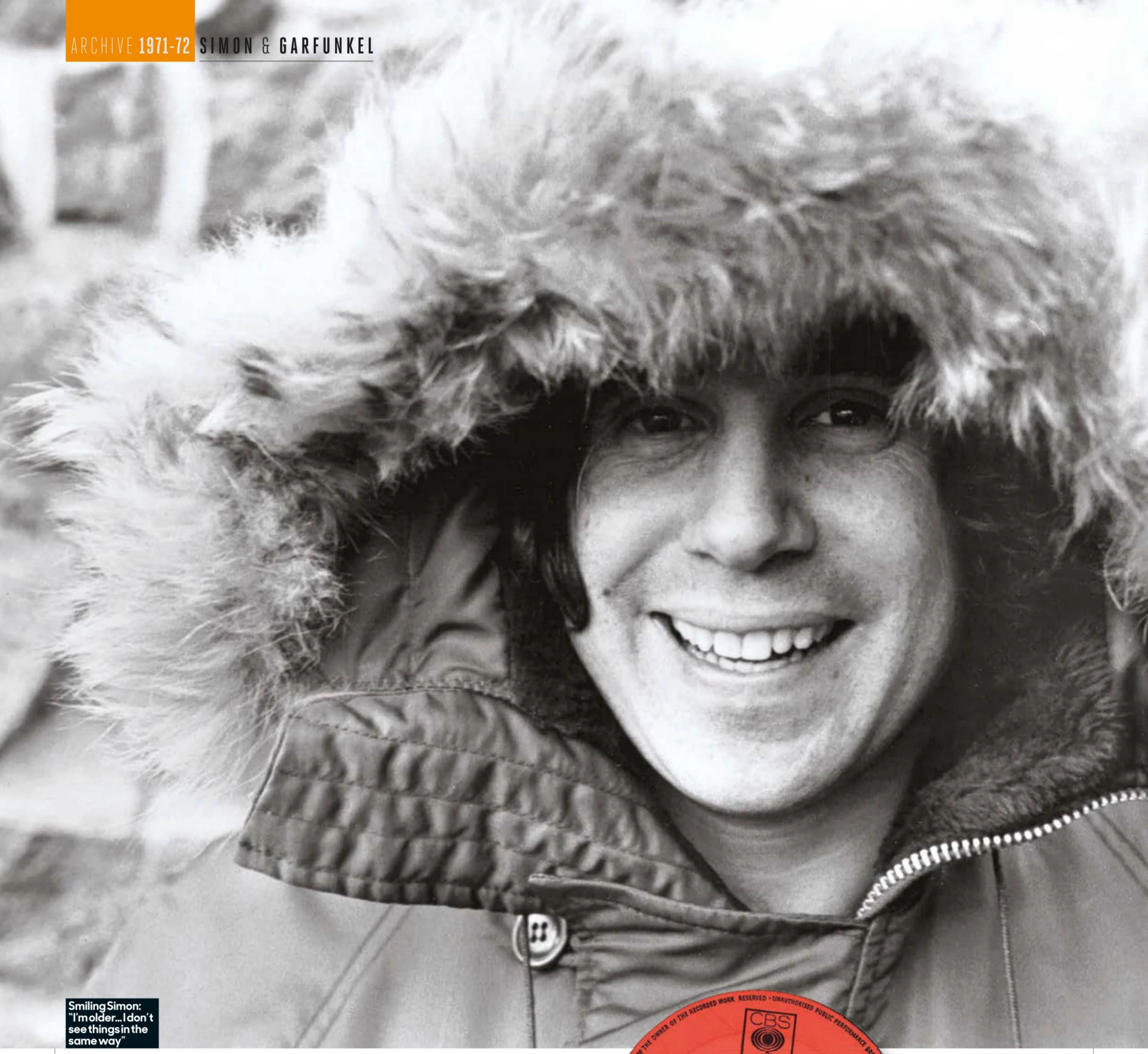


Smiling Simon: "I'm older... I don't see things in the same way"

I wasn't quite sure what I was looking for. They're both really fine musicians and I probably drove them crazy. I didn't really say anything; I kinda wanted to see what would come and it didn't upset me in the least, because I was so used to working that way. I had plenty of time and I was just sorta formulating my ideas.

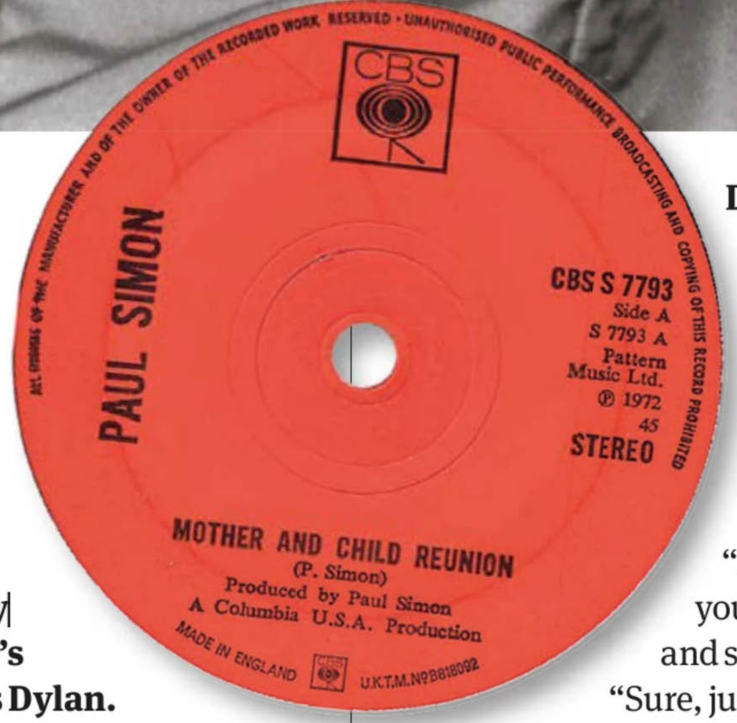
Duck's opinion was that as far as he was concerned, you didn't need any other musicians, just your guitar for support.

That's a very nice thing for him to say. The track I was doing with him, I eventually completed with electric piano and organ played by Larry Knechtel... He's the guy who played on *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, and Joe Osborn, the bass player who was also on that record. The rest of the lineup was Hal Blaine the drummer and myself on guitar, and I feel that particular song came out a lot better than if I had just played it with guitar.

It just took time to evolve, that's all. You see, at that time it just didn't have it. I'm not so much that meticulous about these things, it's just that I'm waiting for something to happen. It can happen one way and I don't want that, but I just don't want to do it that way, because that's not the way I hear the song.

Talking about "The Boxer", there have been many conflicting theories as to the identity of the Boxer – some say it's autobiographical, others Dylan. Then when Dylan recorded it, it was almost like a confirmation. Can you clarify this?

I would say it's autobiographical, although it sure surprised me. When we recorded it, someone said to me, "Hey, that song's about you", and I said, "No, it's not about me, it's about this guy who..." And as I'm saying it, I thought, "Hey, what am I saying; this song is about me and I'm not even admitting it." One thing is certain, I've never written anything about Dylan and I don't know of his personal life.



Do you like Dylan's interpretation of your song?

Well, first of all, I'll tell you how it came about. I was in the studio and Bob Johnston came upstairs and said, "Dylan's downstairs, do you want to come down and say hello?" and I said, "Sure, just as soon as I get a chance", which I did. Then they played "The Boxer" for me, which Dylan had just recorded. It was at a time when he was recording a lot of other people's material for his *Self Portrait* album.

About his version... I don't know, it's hard to say. You see, I identify very strongly with that song. Yes, I suppose it's OK, but I like Simon & Garfunkel's version... I was very pleased with that. It's one of my favourites of all the Simon & Garfunkel records. It's a very personal song and it's hard to imagine any other interpretation. It

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

was fine. It was original. Like anything Dylan does, it has its own thing. He did it differently, and I didn't think anyone could do that. Dylan's version makes me smile. When Aretha came along and then Stevie Wonder did it, they both did it in a way that was very natural for the song and they made it for me... I love it.

There are those people who haven't made good attempts simply because they haven't got the goods to do a good job on anything or because they didn't have enough time. I mean there are more bad records than good records, and so you expect that the majority of covers won't be good, but you're pleased when somebody takes the care and the time to do it well.

What have been your opinions of the countless cover versions recorded of your songs? Do they please you?
Aretha Franklin's version of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was fine. There's been a lot of good versions of that song. In fact I've just heard a good one by Roberta Flack. There are quite a number of cover versions which took the song into another direction than what we did. They are natural directions, because that song was a gospel-type song – it wasn't a gospel song. It had a gospel feel to it and therefore lent itself very well vocally as well as musically to that kind of arrangement.

Artie is not a gospel singer or a soul singer and Simon & Garfunkel never sang in a black voice, because that's not our voice. Artie sang that song, I think, very soulfully. Not black soul; he sang it from his heart and it sounded real.

You haven't appeared in public for nearly two years. Just how important is a live audience to you?
I like it. But there was a time when I wasn't so much bored with performing but bored with what I was doing. You know, singing the required Simon & Garfunkel hits, which realistically speaking you had to do. That's why people came to see you. I mean we just couldn't say, "I can't sing 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' again, because we've sung it so many times." People want to hear it, and if you're going out on a stage then you've got to do it.

"The way of using lyrics is something that you just learn from experience"
Paul Simon

When you relisten to your very earliest material, do you feel some embarrassment like some artists do?
Well, maybe a mild embarrassment. Really it's not just like looking at a picture of yourself in 1959 when everybody had short hair. You look at the picture and you see that the styles are so old-fashioned and you wish that you had been ahead of everyone else and had long hair in 1959. But you didn't.

Do you in fact play all your earlier albums?
No. Well, very seldom.

When you do, is your personal opinion that a particular album was good at that time?
I don't have too much perspective on those albums because some of them were big hits, which tends to colour how I look at them. I tend to think that probably that was good because it was such a big hit, and then when I hear it the thing clouds... I just don't know. I don't spend too much time thinking or worrying about what I did in 1967.

Of all the material that you have written, which is your personal favourite?
Well, most of my favourites are on the new album. It's not because they are the very latest and I haven't as yet had too much of a chance to get used to them.

Your earlier work reflected the hardships that you were enduring in both this country and America. Since achieving and enjoying success – well, you do enjoy success, don't you? [*Simon smiles and nods*] Do you find that in any way your present lifestyle has affected your writing?
I think that the main thing that has altered my writing is the fact that I know a little more about how to write. I don't think it has too much to do with my lifestyle. It might have to do with the subject matter or the musicality of it. The way of using lyrics is something that you just learn from experience and study. I don't think it's a question of lifestyle. I'm older too and I don't see things in the same way.

Do you employ any special method for songwriting?
I do have a method of writing, but I don't know exactly how to verbalise this. For one thing, I don't have a schedule. I have periods of productivity, it's cyclical. I can't say exactly how it happens, but I just sit at the guitar and one minute nothing's happened and the minute later, as I'm thinking, something happens musically. I play it and think about it. If it appeals to me I attach a phrase to it and some of those musical ideas evolve into songs and others go nowhere. I lose interest in it or I don't. That's how I write. I never set out with the intention that I'm going to write this now, or for that matter that I have to write.

In the past you have collaborated with ex-Seeker Bruce Woodley. Have you written songs with any other writers recently?
Well yes. "El Condor Pasa". I only wrote the lyrics; the melody, which is traditional, was one that I learned from the group Les Cincos, so it's a collaboration between my lyrics and their melody. On the new album, there's an instrumental on which I collaborated with jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli.

You have also been studying classical guitar. Will this influence show on the new album?
There's no classical guitar on the new album, but I wouldn't separate my own personal tastes from what I will be doing in the future. Again, that's not to say that I'll be playing classical guitar only. I like it, for it teaches me a lot about music. I love the sound of the instrument. Anyway, I never learned how to play the electric guitar. I can sit and read the music and I don't have to think what I have to make up here or there. Its great music and I love it.

Is there any particular person that you would like to write material for?
Artie Garfunkel. I think that, if I can rouse him up out of his world of Connecticut, he might. I don't see why not – he should. What I mean is, he could make a good album. He needn't if he didn't want to. He hasn't got anything to prove to anybody. All I know is that Artie likes to sing and record. He doesn't write, so he has a problem of finding material, but there's enough good material around.

During your very early career around the London folk clubs, did you for one moment envisage the success that you eventually achieved?
No, of course not. ●

RELEASED: 24 JANUARY | 1972

Paul Simon

Overshadowed by his past, Simon takes a roll of the solo dice. Cue a broad-minded rejuvenation, embracing all Americas and the collaborative world beyond. BY JASON ANDERSON

IN the fall of 1970, Paul Simon found himself in a familiar situation. Once again, a period of great success gave way to more troubled circumstances, causing his confidence to drain. When Columbia executive Clive Davis warned him that ending his partnership with Garfunkel could be the biggest mistake of his life, he didn't necessarily disagree.

Nevertheless, he was relieved when Roy Halee agreed to produce his next album, a sign his old allies weren't about to abandon him. Recorded in five different cities, the record they worked on for much of the next year was actually his second effort under his own name after *The Paul Simon Song Book*. But the public and the music industry were bound to perceive *Paul Simon* as a fresh start, one they didn't much welcome judging by the continuing popularity and prestige of S&G. In March 1971, his old act swept the big three categories at the Grammys. Released the following year, *Simon & Garfunkel's Greatest Hits* would eventually rack up over 14 million sales in the US and cast a very long shadow over the duo's respective separate endeavours.

Adding to Simon's uncertainties was the fact that he had no songs ready when he began the album, though he was more sanguine about that from the happier perspective of two years later. "It was a chance to back out and gamble a little bit," he told *Rolling Stone* about the end of one act in his career and the beginning of the next. "It's been so long since it was a gamble."

Luckily, the gamble paid off. Full of warmth, wit and spontaneity, the 11 songs on *Paul Simon* are a testament to that eagerness to take risks again and up-end the process that had been so fraught during the creation of *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. In so doing, he set himself on a path that would lead to many more gambles. Some would be more successful than others but all proved the viability and integrity of Simon as an artist and songwriter beyond the terms he set – and the frustrations he felt – as half of one of popular music's most successful duos.

As daunting as things may have seemed in 1970, Simon was already finding signposts for promising directions. A songwriting class he taught at New York University – his students included two of The Roches – inspired him to interrogate his own process. A trip to Rio De Janeiro to judge an international song contest bolstered his interest in musical styles and traditions that were largely unknown even to the most adventurous listeners in the US and UK.

For instance, the international breakthrough for Jamaican music was still years away, with the success of Johnny Nash's "I Can See Clearly Now" and Eric Clapton's "I Shot The Sheriff" prefiguring Bob Marley's rise to global stardom. Simon toyed with ska rhythms on *Bridge Over Troubled Water*'s "Why Don't You Write Me?" and believed the same might work for one of his ideas. But when Simon and Halee travelled to Kingston to work with producer Leslie Kong and musicians from Jimmy Cliff's band and the Maytals, the players told him that what they were playing now was reggae, not ska.

Whatever it was, Simon loved the groove they created. Since he'd only roughed out his vocal part with nonsense phonetics – another new tactic that would bear much fruit in the decades to come – he put together the lyrics in New York. The title of "Mother And Child Reunion" was taken from a chicken-and-egg dish he spied on a menu in a Chinese restaurant. The phrase also proved useful for words that touched on his shock and grief after the accident that killed his family dog, which Simon later called "the first death I ever experienced personally". But definitive interpretations about the longed-for reunion that was "*only a motion away*" were elusive, as they would be for many songs on *Paul Simon*. The richer meanings here lay in the sound of an artist determined to wrest all possible joy from the present moment and present company.

The same buoyant spirit informs the song that began in Kingston and became the album's second major hit. Built up from a reggae rhythm that became something closer to a samba thanks to Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira and much cheery guitar jangling, "Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard" was even more nonsensical in the author's view. Still, the song's references to youthful criminality and quintessential Noo Yawk feel made it an unlikely precursor to the sound that dominated the five boroughs 16 years later,

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"As a lyricist Simon has the consummate ability to pen highly descriptive documentaries which he enhances with easily absorbed melodies which range from sheer delicacy to hard bluesy rockers."
Roy Carr, NME. January 8, 1972

"To all the people who've been waiting for this one with eager anticipation, don't worry. It's all you ever wanted. To those who think Paul Simon is a writer of unfinished lyrics and ordinary melodies, taste and try."
Richard Williams, Melody Maker. January 8, 1972

when he appeared in a belated video version alongside Big Daddy Kane and Biz Markie.

Simon's time in Paris was just as productive as the trip to Kingston. With its wistful tale of innocence's end with the girl he saw "*as the road to my survival*", "Duncan" is a storytelling song in the style of "America". Yet it marks another significant development for Simon thanks to its seamless merging of disparate musical elements, most prominently the Andean folk sounds provided by Los Incas, the South American group whose music had previously served as the basis for "El Condor Pasa (If I Could)". While in France, Simon also recorded with Stéphane Grappelli and their duet on the jaunty instrumental "Hobo's Blues" elicits some fine Django-style strumming from the violinist's clearly delighted partner.

Back at work in the US, Simon continued to show a knack for choosing collaborators who consistently elevated even his slightest material. The contributions by jazz great Ron Carter and guitarist Jerry Hahn give some heft to "Run That Body Down", an ambling little charmer about the toll of worrying too much. A Nashville favourite of both Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan, bass harmonica player Charlie McCoy lends ballast to the country blues ditty "Hobo Blues".

The relaxed and generous mood of the music's creation is plain to the ear in Simon's vocal performances on "Peace Like A River" and "Armistice Day", the two songs whose pointed lyrics most clearly invite political readings yet remain open as well. Always one of his own toughest critics, Simon deemed the latter the album's weakest song. Either way, they are atypically dour for an album whose sensibility remains wry and light-hearted even with topics as heavy as loss in "Mother And Child Reunion" and heartbreak in "Congratulations", the album's lovely closer.

An album whose sensibility remains lighthearted even with topics as heavy as loss

However much stress Simon felt as he took his first steps beyond the act that made him rich and famous, he sounds remarkably easy on himself. Judging by the effervescence of "Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard" and the jocularity of the even looser likes of "Paranoia Blues", the process of making music had rarely sounded so pleasurable for him. In that respect, *Paul Simon* was entirely part-and-parcel with the mellow brand of musings by the singer-songwriters who formed his new set of peers, artists like James Taylor, Carole King, Randy Newman and Jackson Browne.

Earning Simon such a comfortable berth in the new decade was yet another fortuitous outcome from his gamble. It was enough to earn him back some of that confidence, if only for a while. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Paul Simon

1. Mother And Child Reunion ★★★★★
2. Duncan ★★★★★
3. Everything Put Together Falls Apart ★★★
4. Run That Body Down ★★★
5. Armistice Day ★★★
6. Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard ★★★★★
7. Peace Like A River ★★★
8. Papa Hobo ★★★★
9. Hobo's Blues ★★★★
10. Paranoia Blues ★★★
11. Congratulations ★★★★

Label: CBS
Produced by: Roy Halee and Paul Simon
Recorded at: CBS Studios, SF; CBS Studios, NYC; Western Recorders, LA; Dynamic Sound Studios, Kingston, JA; Studio CBE, Paris
Personnel incl: Paul Simon (acoustic guitar, vocals, percussion), Hal Blaine (drums), Lynford "Hux" Brown (lead gtr), Ron Carter (double bass), Russell George (bass), Stéphane Grappelli (violin), Winston Grennan (drums), Stefan Grossman (bottleneck gtr), Jerry Hahn (electric gtr), Neville Hinds (organ), Jackie Jackson (bass), Larry Knechtel (keys)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 4

RELEASED: 05 MAY | 1973

There Goes Rhymin' Simon

Something's rotten in the Nixon White House. Rhymin' Simon takes its melodic measure, with help from Muscle Shoals and a certain Big Easy swing. BY TERRY STAUNTON

THERE was a time when the BBC had aggressively strict guidelines as to what was or wasn't broadcast over the airwaves. In 1970, a ban on any lyrical reference to a commercial product necessitated The Kinks changing "*Coca-Cola*" to "*cherry cola*" as a rhyme for "*Lola*", so three years later there wasn't a cat in hell's chance of the corporation giving needle time to a track entitled "Kodachrome".

Clearly the rules had been relaxed somewhat by 2003 when the cartoon-like combo Fast Food Rockers reached No 2 on the UK charts with a song whose chorus bellowed, "*McDonald's! McDonald's! Kentucky Fried Chicken and a Pizza Hut*", but back in '73 the restrictions forced the British arm of Paul Simon's label into a Plan B. "Kodachrome" was chosen to trail *There Goes Rhymin' Simon* in the US, and it powered to the higher echelons of the Billboard chart with its bouncy rhythm and alternating reflective/optimistic lyric full of dry wit (the double-negative gag "*My lack of education hasn't hurt me none*" would later be recycled by Pink Floyd in "Another Brick In The Wall").

It is, in many ways, an archetypal Simon tune (working title the less problematic "Goin' Home") that wouldn't have sounded out of place on the all-conquering *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, but in the UK an enforced but savvy, semi-leftfield choice of first single did a more precise job of promoting the rootsy contents of much of the parent album.

"Take Me To The Mardi Gras" is an unashamedly romantic eulogy to New Orleans and its indigenous music. Simon's double-tracked vocal invites us to celebrate the joys of the Crescent City, handing over the reins to the sweet falsetto of Reverend Claude Jeter (founder of gospel legends the Swan Silvertones all the way back in 1938) for the middle-eight, before the instrumental Dixieland jazz coda provided by the veteran Onward Brass Band.

It's one of several detours on *Rhymin' Simon*, alongside the upbeat call-and-response testifying of second single "Loves Me Like A Rock" (on which Paul trades lines with Jeter's current gospel greats the Dixie Hummingbirds), the noir-ish jazz sophistication of "Tenderness" and "One Man's Ceiling Is Another Man's Floor" (a style he would explore further on *Still Crazy After All These Years*), and the lightweight pop calypso of "Was A Sunny Day", where he is joined by Maggie and Terre Roche, soon to find fame of their own as a vocal trio with a third sister, Suzzy.

If the album's eponymous predecessor was designed to establish its maker as a newly solo proposition no longer quite so reliant on the extraordinary vocal range of his erstwhile partner, *Rhymin' Simon* sought to add depth and breadth to his musical personality. Here is a man trawling the rich history of American popular song for inspiration (recording in New York, Mississippi and Alabama suggested a search for authenticity), and who, on one of the record's high watermarks, casts a contemplative eye over America itself.

When Simon began making the album in September of '72, Richard Nixon was campaigning for a second term in the White House, the full extent of his involvement in the Watergate break-in three months earlier still unknown. However, the liberal left of which the singer-songwriter was clearly a representative were asking more and more questions, while simultaneously still waiting for answers to questions about the country's continued presence in Vietnam.

"American Tune" took shape as the sessions progressed. An early demo version, subsequently included as a bonus track on

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Undoubtedly a good album, hard to criticise. It works better than his first and shows a progression that restates much of his musical background."
Tony Stewart, NME, May 12, 1973

"Simon's lyrics have a lot to say about the human condition but he doesn't act as if he's reading the holy word... 'Loves Me Like A Rock' is the perfect ending to an album that will make your spirits soar on the gloomiest day."
Melody Maker, May 12, 1973

a 2004 reissue, maps out the melody inspired by the 18th-century hymn "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" (itself borrowing from Johann Sebastian Bach), but with only the third-verse lyric and its abstract imagery of the Statue of Liberty completed.

In the ensuing weeks Simon would add to the song, initially as a first-person "confused" and "misused" combatant in a war seemingly without end ("*I'm all right, just weary to my bones/Still, you don't expect to be bright and bon vivant so far away from home*"). The second verse, however, can be read both as a continuation of that soldier's field-of-conflict mindset, or as a broader rumination on the escalating constitutional crisis back in Washington: "*I don't know a soul who's not been battered/I don't have a friend who feels at ease/I don't know a dream that's not been shattered/Or driven to its knees.*"

Seen by some as a companion piece to Simon & Garfunkel's 1968 hit "America", itself a meditation on the state of the nation, the less obtuse triggers that inspired "American Tune" led Columbia to release the track as a single, although its pointedly political undertones were greeted with reluctance by radio stations to play it on heavy rotation, and it only scraped the lower end of the Top 40.

It's a lighter, less restless Simon who rears his head on the shuffling lullaby "St Judy's Comet", troubled only by the difficulties faced putting his offspring down for the night ("*If I can't sing my boy to sleep it makes your famous daddy look so dumb*"), and on the fanciful tale of star-cross'd lovers "Was A Sunny Day", its mention of Mr Earl a direct reference to the protagonist of one of Simon's favourite songs from his youth, the 1955 doo-wop hit "Speedo" by The Cadillacs.

> Here is a man trawling the rich history of American popular song for inspiration

The key to the variety of *Rhymin' Simon* is the impressive roll call of supporting players, with very few featuring on more than two or three tracks, Simon cutting his collaborative cloth to suit the mood of the individual track. He also calls on some high-profile names to help elevate his songs from bare bones, New Orleans royalty Allen Toussaint's subtle horn arrangement distinguishing "Tenderness" and Quincy Jones's string charts adding rich textures to "Something So Right".

Similarly, where in the past engineer Roy Halee had been an integral component of most of S&G's triumphs, he's just one of four producers credited here for what results in more than a single snapshot of a career trajectory; a succession of enticing aural photographs that, like Kodak's popular film, gives us those nice bright colours. ●

SLEEVENOTES | There Goes Rhymin' Simon

1. Kodachrome ★★★★★
2. Tenderness ★★★★★
3. Take Me To The Mardi Gras ★★★★★
4. Something So Right ★★★★
5. One Man's Celing Is Another Man's Floor ★★★★
6. American Tune ★★★★★
7. Was A Sunny Day ★★★
8. Learn How To Fall ★★★
9. St Judy's Comet ★★★★
10. Loves Me Like A Rock ★★★★

Label: CBS (UK)/ Columbia (US)
Produced by: Paul Simon, Phil Ramone, Paul Samwell-Smith, Roy Halee
Recorded at: Columbia Studios and A&R Recording, NYC; Malaco Studios, Jackson, Mississippi; Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, Sheffield, Alabama; Morgan Studios, London
Personnel incl: Paul Simon (vocals, guitar), Pete Carr, Jimmy Johnson, Cornell Dupree, David Spinozza, Jerry Puckett (guitars), David Hood, Gordon Edwards, Bob Cranshaw, Vernie Robbins (bass), Richard Davis (double bass)
Highest chart position: UK 4; US 2

"I had to prove myself a better writer than I was with Simon & Garfunkel"

Fresh from Muscle Shoals, **PAUL SIMON** resolves to hit the road in support of *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*, refusing to fall into complacency. There's the threat of irrelevance and his own past to compete with. All at his own pace, mind. "Songwriting," he says, "is like the mating season. Personally I write best in winter. I'm not in the mood to write in summer. Anyways, I'm vacationing"

RB/REDFERNS

MM 12/5/1973

I CAN think of nothing worse than listening to a brand-new album for the first time with the artist present. What if I don't like it much? What do I say? Even if I do like it, doesn't it sound like I'm trying too hard to be polite if I rave about it? So when Paul Simon told me to meet him at his office in an east '50s brownstone to hear an acetate of the new album with him, I asked for a test pressing. But no, the test wasn't even ready yet because he and Phil Ramone, engineer and owner of A&R studios and co-producer of several of the cuts on this LP, hadn't gotten a satisfactory master yet.

I shouldn't have worried, *There Goes Rhymin' Simon* is certainly one of the finest albums I have ever heard. Sitting on a white leather couch next to its creator, a person I first met in Detroit in 1965 when he and Artie were out promoting *Sounds of Silence*, I felt slightly in awe of him.

After all, for the past few years the music business has been wondering what's the next new thing and artists have been quick to hop on any new trend whether it be glitter, country, teeny or nostalgia. Somehow music often got lost in this flood of sequins and noise and lollipops. Thanks to Paul Simon there's no need to wonder about music.

There Goes Rhymin' Simon is a profoundly musical album infused with the knowledge and taste of a mature artist. Over the years the folk and rock basis upon which Simon's music originated has broadened to pick up other influences – reggae, jazz gospel, soul – so that now at the age of 31 he has turned out an album that is uniquely his and right for this time.

Although there are cuts that use gospel quartets as back-up singers, others with strings or New Orleans jazz players or island rhythms, it remains a simply elegant album – very rich and full only because just the right blending of sound is there, not because there's an excess of effect.

You might say it's like going to a party where all of the women are gussied up in yards of laces and fringes and beads and rings and the one woman who stands out clothes her smashing figure in the simple black dress with one perfect diamond flashing at her throat.

THIS PERFECT album took six to seven months to write and then four months in studios in New York, Muscle Shoals, Alabama and London. It took less time to do this than his first solo LP and Paul explains, "It was about two years between *Bridge Over Troubled Water* and that one since I didn't work straight. It's now about 14 months since my last one. An album in anything less than 18 months for me is lightning."

There's more emphasis on voices in this new album than the last, and Paul says the first time out as a solo artist he wanted to avoid singing harmony with himself because people would wonder why he bothered to stop singing with Artie. But he digs the richness of voices. Listening to a lot of gospel quartets made him decide to use the Dixie Hummingbirds and the Rev Claude Jeter, who was lead singer with the Swan Silvertones.

On "Was A Sunny Day" he's backed by Maggie and Terre Roach, two girls he met when he was teaching a course in songwriting. Instead of working with Roy Halee, the engineer who formerly co-produced with him, Paul decided to go with Phil Ramone, who had done a cut on his last LP.

"There were two factors for the switch," says Paul. "One was that Artie was working with Roy exclusively. And number two, I like Phil. I worked with him before on 'Me And Julio', and he's in New York, he's accessible and he's good."

Another change for him was recording five of the songs in Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

"I called up Al Bell at Stax Records," he explains, "and asked him who played on The Staple Singers' 'I'll Take You There' record. He told me about the guys in Muscle Shoals. "I went down there and they're sensational musicians. Very friendly, very comfortable studio. It's easy to work and I can work very rapidly down there, so I ended up doing five cuts instead of the one I intended to do.

"I originally intended to do 'Take Me To The Mardi Gras', which was sort of that American white reggae that 'I'll Take You There' was. I finished it in one day and was so shocked because it used to take me so long to do things.

"I had booked the studio for three days, so I said, 'Which one do you want to do?' and they said 'Kodachrome', so we did that the next day. They do head arrangements but they're very sophisticated. They write down the changes and they're very fast. It's something to see; it's spectacular.

"I think to a degree you can get different sounds out of different studios, but I don't go for the studio. I go for the musicians. They're very versatile because they sound entirely different on 'Kodachrome' and 'St Judy's Comet' and 'One Man's Ceiling Is Another Man's Floor'. The five things that they did were all different."

Although he lives in New York and wouldn't want to settle anywhere else, he did enjoy his trips to Muscle Shoals. "I was pretty content in Sheffield County, Alabama. That was peaceful. There's nothing to do but go into a recording studio. I'd stay there for three or four days at a time and then come back to the city.

"When you're really frantic, when you really get yourself worked up, there's nothing like a good Holiday Inn. You don't have anything to do there. You're back to watching Johnny Carson again." Paul laughs, talking about America's favourite late-night TV talk show.

EVEN though Paul is certainly one of the most successful and wealthy musicians in the world, he's maintained a down-to-earth sense of humour. Although from watching him I know that he is an incredible perfectionist in the studio, it hasn't turned him into a temperamental prima donna.

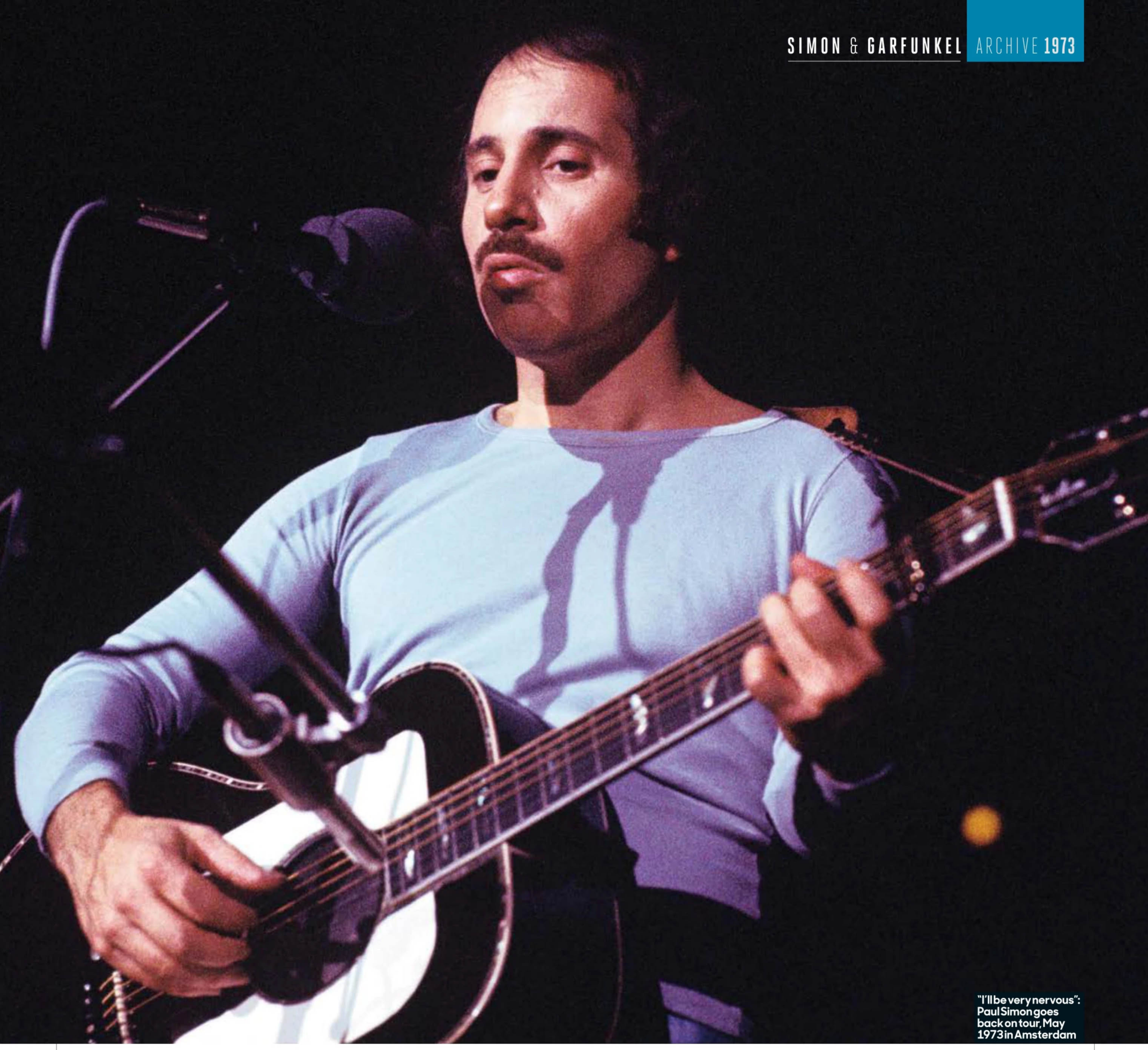
His lyrics have always had a lot to say about the human condition, but he doesn't act as if he's reading the holy word.

In fact, he admits that when he hears a record he mostly listens to the sound.

"I really have to concentrate to hear the lyrics. The lyrics come much later. I don't think lyrics are important to very many people. Of course, I write lyrics, so they're important to me. I want to say something, but I know a lot of people don't listen to lyrics."

There are times when Paul is amused by what people read into his lyrics. A magazine recently

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



"I'll be very nervous": Paul Simon goes back on tour, May 1973 in Amsterdam

quoted Truman Capote as saying that "Me And Julio" was a homosexual song.

"I can understand how people would read that into it," he grins. "But as a matter of fact, it is not about a homosexual encounter. I would include myself in the rock world amongst the heterosexuals."

Though Columbia is re-releasing "Kodachrome" as the single, Paul would have preferred something else.

"I felt it would be nice if I had a single out that was one of the prettier ballads on this album," he explains, "because I feel that I'm at my best when I'm writing ballads, but it appears that a ballad is not going to be the single. I do my best to make the record as valid as I can musically, but once it's finished then Columbia goes and sells it. That's what I want them to do, so I'm finished now."

HE'S now getting set for an 11-city tour that winds up in London in June but doesn't feel that he has to sound the same as on record on stage.

"I want to say something, but I know a lot of people don't listen to lyrics"

Paul Simon

"It's impossible," he points out. "I'd have to be pulling elements from all over the globe to reproduce it. I don't think it's necessary. Guitar is enough."

On stage he will be backed by Urubamba, who used to be called Los Incas except there's a lawsuit going on about that name.

They have two flutes, percussion and charanga, which is the instrument on "El Condor Pasa". It's made from the skin of an armadillo with a wooden front and four double strings. For backup singers he'll use the Jesse Dixon Singers, a gospel group he heard at last summer's Newport Jazz Festival.

This will be his first tour except for a couple of appearances last summer at McGovern benefits, since he and Artie broke up.

Last fall he was supposed to perform but first got the flu and couldn't sing and then hurt the bone in his left index finger, so that he couldn't play. Even now it's bad and when it gets too painful he has to have a cortisone shot which numbs it for a couple of days.

Why has he decided to tour now?

"Well I think I just decided to do something so I'd be just getting off my ass. I just like to be nervous, that's all. I'll be very nervous because I haven't done it for so long."

He's not particularly concerned about whether the audience has changed in all this time.

"I went to a Roberta Flack concert a while ago. I thought it was pretty much the same thing. I'll go out and I'll sing my songs and I'll try to sing in tune and basically that's what I have to offer. People either want to hear me sing my songs

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS/GETTY

or they don't, so I feel that nobody will be expecting any more out of me than that. I don't think they'll be disappointed. I'll be nervous but I think they'll be just as nervous."

HE GOES to concerts very occasionally, but did see the Stones at Madison Square Garden last summer.

"I couldn't get off on The Rolling Stones," he says. "The most interesting thing about the Rolling Stones concert was the mechanical aspect of the audience. How they did things in unison and at programmed times.

"I didn't find it scary, just young. The young want to do everything together. They want to be original."

Actually, Paul finds most of the music today aimed at younger people and can't get that interested in it because he finds too many meaningless and banal songs or freakiness with no lasting musical value or a reversion to '50s rock'n'roll. Of course, he did like those sounds of the '50s.

"I'm nostalgic about my teenage years like everybody is," he explains. "That music was valid, it was honest music, it was real. It was just made by very young people, 15, 16, 17 years old. People making music today are most probably in the 25–30-year-old group.

"When I was a kid in the Tom And Jerry days, if you were 18 years old, you were pretty old. The perfect age to be was 16. Frankie Avalon was 16 or 17. Frankie Lyman was 14 or 15. People are older today, so if you're older and you're doing puerile music, it doesn't make it. If you're a kid and you do kid music, that's alright if you're a kid who's listening. To 14-year-olds I'm sure the music is interesting. But if you've been listening to rock'n'roll for 16 years like me, it's boring."

Although he doesn't care too much about popular music, he does like the Jamaican and gospel music because he finds it authentic and an expression of real people about their real lives and they are not angling to make a big hit.

"I appreciate that Elton John makes a good record but I honestly am not interested in it. I don't mean it in any offensive way. He's good. He might be the best in the world at making records as far as I'm concerned. They all sound so good and full. I just couldn't care less. I've been doing it too long."

Another thing he doesn't dig about the current state of music is the lack of good singers and he thinks that more emphasis on vocals might interest him.

"What's wrong is the emphasis that came in in the '60s on the singer-songwriter – and I contributed to that. So nobody's content to be a songwriter any more or a singer. A good songwriter like Jim Webb or Paul Williams feels compelled to go out and be an artist and they're so mediocre. If you had a really good group like Poco who are not top-notch songwriters, they never reach their potential.

"Maybe lately with people like Bette Midler and that style who record other people's songs, there'll be a return of the interpretative artist in which case the level of singing will go up because the level of singing is pretty bad.

"There's not very many good white singers around. There was always an emphasis on singers in black music and people like Dionne Warwick and Aretha Franklin came out of gospel because vocal virtuosity in gospel music was always highly esteemed."

LORAINE ALTERMAN

NME 16/6/1973

HERE comes Rhymin' Simon, and he's tired. The fact that he slept virtually right round the clock hasn't in any way compensated for what Simon describes as "a case of New York City time zone". Ever experienced jet-lag? Then you'll know just how wasted you can feel.

Right now, the tell-tale signs of advanced lethargy are clearly evident as the man strolls slowly across the room to raid the drinks table for what he trusts will prove a mild pick-me-up.

As it is – in the brilliant sunlight – the observer can't help but notice the look of strain etched into that smooth, sallow profile. Simon pauses only momentarily to check out the assembled company, to smile at those faces that are familiar and cautiously appraise those that are not.

Simon long since stopped living out of a suitcase on a regular basis, and reverting to his former lifestyle for the American and British concerts is taking more out of his system than you might

"I'm nostalgic about my teenage years. That music was made by very young people"

Paul Simon

imagine. Paul, you better look around, how long do you think that you can run your body down?

He settles on the green chaise-longue, takes a taster and enquires: "Are you interviewing me, or am I interviewing you?"

I'm almost tempted to suggest that it would be more enjoyable amusing Harper, his young son, or kicking a ball around Hyde Park, but... well.

Despite the tiredness, Simon is nevertheless outspoken about his career and failings. He points out that the title of his new album, *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*, isn't just a cute play on words, but a subtle inference that he has arrived at yet another important juncture in his already remarkable career.

Simon frankly admits that he could perhaps be finished. However, he is quick to emphasise that the creative urge of the artist remains.

His verbal thoughts – flowing stream of consciousness – suggest that he's maybe exhausted what he terms "this phase in my life, of the eclectic form of recording.

"If I'm going to be totally realistic, I honestly don't think I will ever repeat the success of Simon & Garfunkel. But I hope to prove myself to be a much better writer than I was when I wrote for Simon & Garfunkel."

He pauses before stipulating: "And it's only this which keeps the game alive for me."

Simon perhaps underestimates not only his personal contribution to contemporary music, but also the incredible artistic standard he has set and maintained. Few musicians have enjoyed 100 per cent batting average.

WHILE many of his contemporaries have blown it, Paul Simon has retained his equilibrium – his new material is as good, if not better, than anything he's put down in the past.

This man's train of creative thought is amazingly positive. No sidetracks. No comebacks. Neither is he inhibited by his own consummate talent.

Even the phenomenal success of *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, and the split with Artie Garfunkel, didn't in any way impair his direction. It is futile to compare one collection of Simon songs with its predecessor.

"You can't ever write the same thing twice," Simon insists. "I know some people try to, but that's silly 'cause it just doesn't work."

No-one has ever needed to pose the question "Will success spoil Paul Simon?" but the fact remains that success has been known to sate the hunger of innumerable artists. Simon concedes to this.

"That's very true. But I don't think it's the hunger that is dimmed, it's their drive to become successful.

"I don't know if I have as much drive to be successful as I did when I first started out, but I still have the desire to be good."

His reasoning is as short as it is logical: "It's very embarrassing to be bad. When I became a solo performer again, on the surface I was doing something different, because people always thought of me as being one half of a group.

"Now if you find what I'm doing interesting in terms of musicality, then that's great. That means I succeeded." But he warns: "Once you get to know me, once you've heard four or five Paul Simon albums, then you might feel that there is a same-ness and predictable quality about what I do."

"SONGWRITING," says Paul Simon, "is like the mating season. Personally I write best in winter. I'm not in the mood to write in summer. Anyways, I'm always out of doors, vacationing.

"But then it doesn't really matter when you write, just so long as you have a nice quiet corner, a nice set of strings and your guitar sounds good.

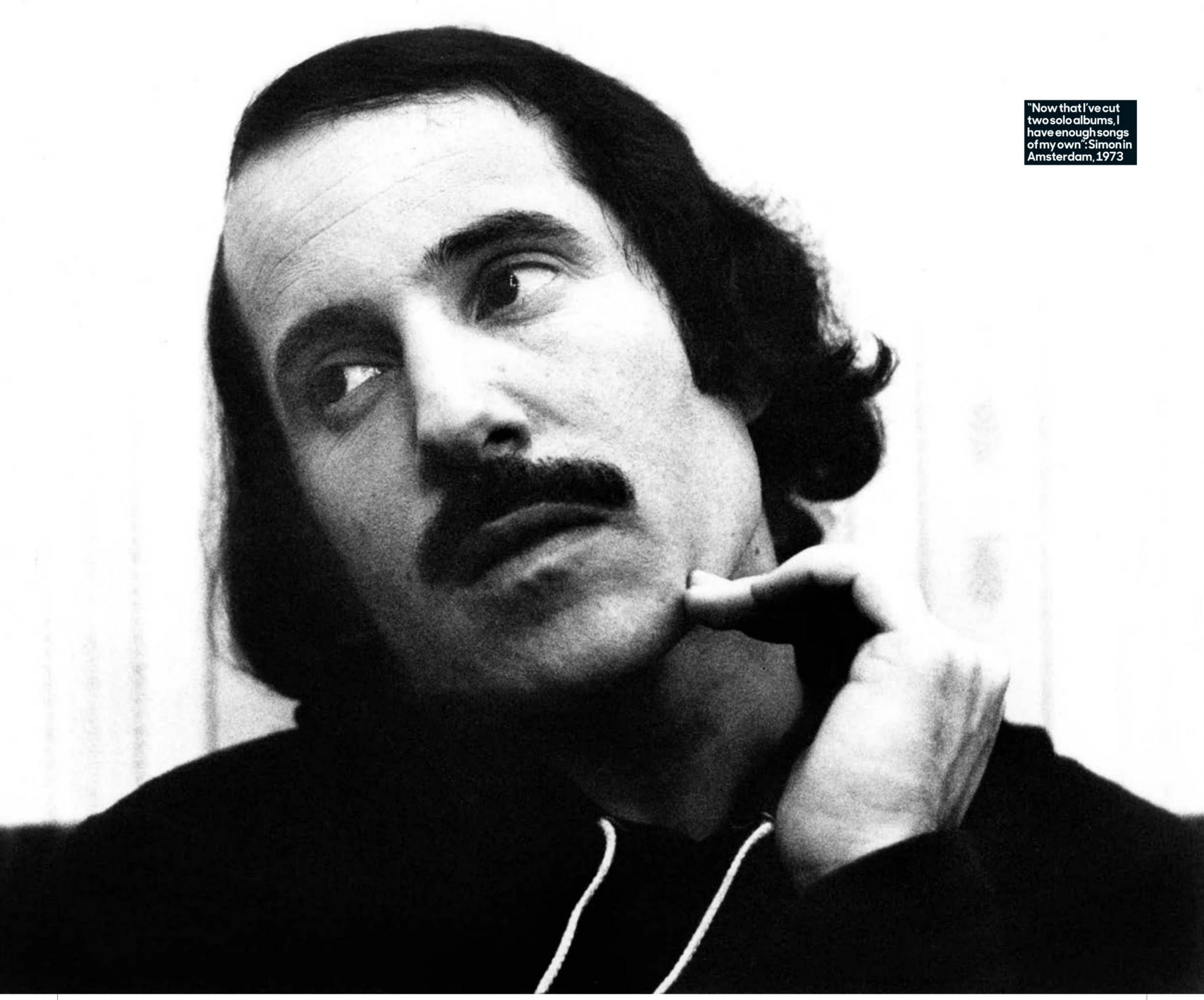
"The thing a lot of people fail to realise is that, invariably, the process of creative thought formulates itself when you're not even conscious of it."

Though not prolific – preferring quality to quantity – Simon offers an insight into his writing prowess: "Usually I start to think of those elements that are appealing, and from those I hope I will have all the basic components that will go to make up a future album.

"On this new album," he continues, "I've utilised black gospel music. Now this is something that I may go back to again; on the other hand, I might not. I could be absorbed in something totally different. At the moment, I'd like to explore the possibilities of working with a full orchestra, or with avant-garde composers like Gunther Schuller. But no matter what I

GUS STEWART/REDFERNS

"No matter what I get into, my pop head always dictate": Simon on stage at the Royal Albert Hall, London, June 7, 1973



"Now that I've cut two solo albums, I have enough songs of my own": Simon in Amsterdam, 1973

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

get into, my pop head always dictates. In actual fact, my interest in gospel music first showed up on 'Keep The Customer Satisfied' and then again on 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'. Right after that I got side-tracked with reggae, and immediately following the split with Artie I tended to get a little inhibited as to using a lot of vocals.

"As you'll hear on the new album, I've just gotten around to doing something I had an idea about three or four years ago."

Simon is now quite alert and informative, throwing out such little vignettes as: "If you listen to any of my albums, you will hear what kind of music I was playing at home a year before that album was recorded.

"At the moment I like Stealers Wheel's 'Stuck In The Middle With You', which is the best Bob Dylan record since 1967."

He starts to laugh: "Well it is, isn't it?

"Also I enjoy Stevie Wonder's 'Sunshine Of My Life', Steely Dan's 'Reelin' In The Years', Elton John's 'Daniel' and Paul McCartney's *Red Rose Speedway* album. Peg and I play that a lot when we're home."

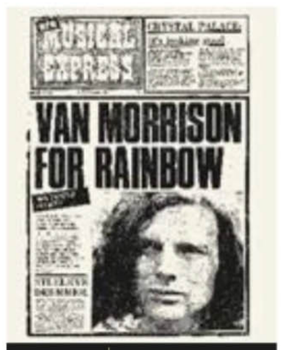
THERE are innumerable factors that have made Paul Simon a relatively inactive stage performer. He denies any suggestion that he's been drawn into the fashionable recluse syndrome. First off, the reason why Artie and I stopped touring was simple. We had both agreed that we had reached a logical conclusion to our constantly going out on the road. You've got to remember that we were locked into the same material every night, and when you are in this situation there are a lot of pressures forced on a group. So therefore, it was the end for Simon & Garfunkel.

"When that part of my life finished I didn't have the desire to tour, and more important neither did I have a repertoire. I couldn't very well go out and redo the Simon & Garfunkel repertoire, even though I'm entitled to sing them because I was one half of the act. But it wouldn't have been me. Now that I've cut two solo albums, I have enough songs of my own, plus a few of the older material.

"I still have a healthy enough ego to want to do things well and for people to say that I'm good, but I was only prepared to go out on the road once I was ready. And I'm ready now."

He may insist that there goes rhymin' Simon, but you can bet we haven't seen the last of him. As Simon himself points out: "Rock is a strange field where everything tends to happen when you're in your twenties. But, in most fields, people don't conceive their very best work until they're in their thirties and forties."

Paul Simon is 31, Stay tuned. **ROY CARR**



NME 23/6/1973

"Hey, schoolgirl in the second row, the teacher's looking over so I got to whisper way down low/ To say, 'Who-bop-a-loo-chi bop', let's meet after school at three."

NAIVE and faintly laughable as they seem now, these lyrics – written in 1957 – somehow manage to personify how life must have been for a 15-year-old pupil at Forest Hills High School in the suburbs of New York.

They were conceived by a chubby-faced, flat-topped kid from out of Queens, working under the non-de-plume of Paul Kane. An average sort of adolescent who, in later years, was to have his work seriously compared to that of TS Elliot.

Under yet another pseudonym – Jerry Landis, and with the help of his school chum Tom Graph – "Hey Schoolgirl" was soon to be immortalised on seven inches of shining black plastic. By way of a cutesy record company gimmick, the label proclaimed them simply as Tom And Jerry.

The record sold 100,000 copies, which was to make our heroes the toast of the local burger joint and corner soda shop.

Casting his eyes over the clichéd lyrics of "Hey Schoolgirl", and over a selection of faded photos

depicting two very cool cats cutting-the-mustard in their dapper draped sports coats, snazzy bowties, pegged pants and the inevitable white bucks (just like Pat Boone made popular), Paul Simon is taking a long hard look at himself as he appeared 16 years ago. And if you haven't already sussed it, the finger-poppin' smoothie trading under the name of Tom Graph, was none other than Arthur Garfunkel.

Simon is casually thumbing through a tome of his (almost) collected works when, suddenly, he stops. The memories flood back as he gazes at the open page; his attention centred upon a snapshot that freezes Tom And Jerry "rippin' it up" at a record hop.

"Hey, I want to show you something real interesting," he says. "See that man." He indicates a jovial gentleman clapping his hands in the background. "That's my father."

Due to their youth and the fact that they were still in school, Tom And Jerry looked to Simon Senior for the duties of chauffeur, roadie, chaperone and soda-pop hustler.

Like innumerable other acts of the period, Tom And Jerry were "has-beens" within the space of 12 months. But not before they'd made a few appearances at local sock-hops and chalked up two brief TV shots.

One of the latter was on that perennial exhortation to apple pie and ice cream, *American Bandstand*, the host of which was Uncle Sam's oldest teenager, Dick Clark. "Funnily enough," says Simon, "I bumped into Dick Clark just the other day and asked him if he remembered Artie and I being on his show. He didn't."

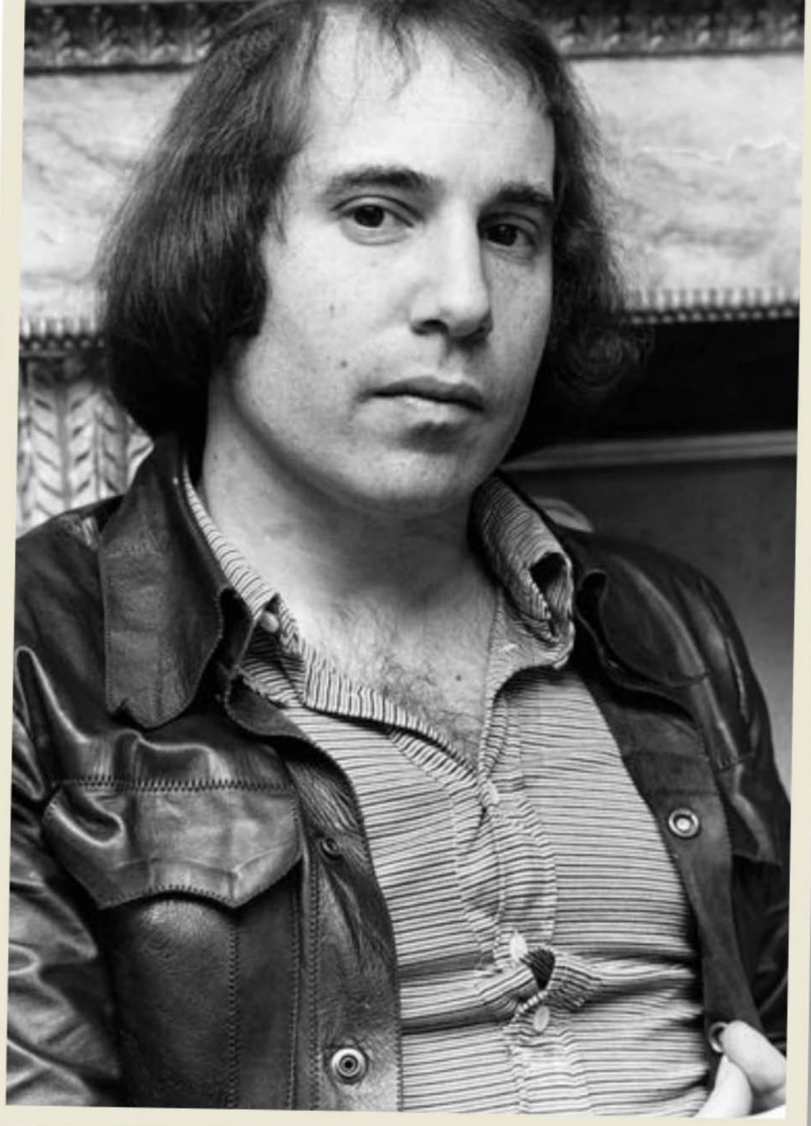
Paul Simon finds that mildly amusing, but on the other hand is saddened by the knowledge that the only tapes Clark doesn't possess of all the *Bandstand* shows he hosted... are those for November 1957. "And it was on Thanksgiving Day, to be exact, that we appeared on his show," Simon remembers, with just a hint of frustration in his voice.

So, unless someone out there in Teen Town USA has a copy tape of that programme, all visual documentation of Tom And Jerry has been lost forever. But not their records.

Some time ago – 1967 to be precise – a budget album appeared on Allegro (ALL. 836) which collated the Tom And Jerry material. Due to a number of legal complications – surrounding the fact that it was packaged and promoted as a Simon & Garfunkel collection – it was hastily withdrawn. Few copies remain in circulation.

"Actually, only four or maybe five tracks on that album were by Tom And Jerry," emphasises one half of the duo, "the others were by various unknown people."

The Tom And Jerry cuts are: "Hey Schoolgirl", "Our Song", "That's My Story", "Dancin' Wild" and "Don't Say Goodbye". Apart from the slow, maudlin doo-wopper "That's My Story", which wouldn't be out of place on a Sha Na Na or Rueben & The Jets album, the tracks are pale imitations of the Everly Brothers. Basically, guitars strummin' on three chords – with a nifty E flat/C/G thrown in for effect – a tambourine chinking on the back beat and the lads hic-cupping here, there and everywhere. And of course, "Hey



"I can remember being paid 15 dollars a time cutting demos for Burt Bacharach"

Schoolgirl", which contains that clarion call of untamed youth: "*Who-bop-a-loo-chi-bop?*"

"You know how that came about," says Simon. "There was this kid at high school... I remember him quite well, his name was Mort. Anyway, one day Mort comes charging up to me in school hollering: 'Have you heard the new Little Richard record yet?'

"I told him I hadn't. But there's Mort, jumping all over the place yelling that it's incredible and that throughout the record, Little Richard keeps on screamin' something real weird, like 'Who-bop-a-loo' or something like that.

"From what I could make out from what Mort said, it was 'Who-bo-a-loo-chi-bop'. And that's how it came out. It was only much later when I'd heard Little Richard's 'Tuttit-Frutti' that I realised, in fact, that he was yelling 'A-Wop-Bop-A-Loo-Bop-A-Lop-Bam-Boom'."

Though Paul and Artie were for the time being washed up as Tom And Jerry – Garfunkel moving to Columbia University to study mathematics and Simon majoring in English Lit at Queen's University – Jerry Landis hadn't entirely hung up his rock'n'roll shoes. I mean, he'd hardly broken 'em in.

"In those days, you could earn money making masters or demos, so that's what I did. I can remember being paid 15 dollars a time cutting demos for Burt Bacharach.

"Also, around that time, I teamed up briefly with this girl called Carole Klein to do vocal overdubs." The young Miss Klein was soon to change her name to King and... but that's another story. This was all taking place before Don Kirschner had put his songwriting stable together, of Goffin & King, Neil Sedaka and the rest... so I didn't know any of those people."

However, Jerry Landis did take time out from showing other singers how a song should be sung to cut some titles of his own.

"'Motorcycle' backed with 'Lisa' – now if you can find that one on the Amy label (a subsidiary of Bell Records), you'll hear some real rock'n'roll stuff," he confesses with glee. "Actually, 'Motorcycle' sold around 100,000 copies and is now quite a sought-after record among collectors. I'll tell ya, I don't know where they get that stuff.

"I also cut a few more one-off singles around 1962 for some other companies." Unfortunately, titles and labels elude him, except to state: "Most of them were real big flops."

After his stint at Queen's College, Simon enrolled in law school but quit on two separate occasions, determined to make it as a musician.

The second time he dropped out, he dropped into London. The year was 1964 and, still retaining the name Jerry Landis, he cut "Carlos Dominguez" and "He Was My Brother" for Oriole (CB.1930). The record made little impact. Nevertheless, it was indicative – to paraphrase Paul Simon's own words – of him on his way to the Magic City, there to become a poet.

Prior to his arrival in London, Paul had found sufficient time to reunite with Artie to cut an album for CBS entitled *Wednesday Morning, 3am*, and for a time, they nearly became known as Simon & Garfield. "I was frightened they might think we were comedians or something," Simon said at the time. Garfield, Garfunkel – the album was a non-mover, so Simon cut his own album, *The Paul Simon Song Book*, in London...

'Folk rock' was starting to become a tag by which to sell records, and after hearing S&G's acoustic version of "Sound Of Silence" on the radio, producer Tom Wilson dashed round to the CBS studio and overdubbed strings on the track. It was goodbye Tom And Jerry, welcome Simon & Garfunkel, and the record became a world-wide smash.

For a man who has been responsible for composing some of the most beautiful and perceptive songs of his generation, it is interesting to return to the first paragraph of the sleeve note he wrote for *The Paul Simon Songbook*:

"I start with the knowledge that everything I write will turn and laugh at me. Still you never get used to mocking laughter. I am forever withdrawn and shuffling before my own words." ●

ROY CARR

Record producer Tom Wilson, New York City, 1967

POPSIERANDOLPH/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES;HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

RELEASED: 1973 – 2007

Art Garfunkel The Solo Years

Art imitates art. How the sensitive star of the screen broached a solo career incorporating roles as LA roué, rabbit whisperer, songbook crooner, even nativity singer. BY NICK HASTED

THE giant note Art Garfunkel sustains at "Bridge Over Troubled Water"'s climax contains all the song's promise. It is the hope of Paul Simon's lyrics satisfied, their offered rescue enacted. It lays the ground for Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" at its best, and every other *X Factor* favourite and Coldplay placebo for the lightly wounded at its worst. In its arrangement and its impact, it is so much Artie's record, and towered over 1970. And yet during the seven hours of his 10 solo albums, he never really goes near such crescendos again. The distant, delicate persona on these recordings is a more reserved project.

The question of how a singer survives in the rock age without writing songs is Garfunkel's fundamental problem. It's all the more remarkable, then, that it was he who cut Simon loose, for reasons he suggested years later, when journalist Paul Zollo asked if it had been satisfying to sing Simon's songs. "That's a psychiatric question," Garfunkel replied. "If I were my own analyst I would say, 'Not really.' Something in the back of your mind felt stifled by accepting that bargain... [*and*] that imbalance and frustration led to me accepting Mike Nichols' movie offer."

Indeed, Garfunkel's first attempts to escape the indignity of his dependence on Simon were on screen, when he took the supporting role of naive Lieutenant Nately, "nearly 20" and doomed, in Nichols' *Catch-22* (1970). It was an arena where Artie's handsomeness and golden halo of hair for once gave him a conclusive edge over his partner. "I look like a movie star," Simon recalled him crowing when Nichols then gave him a leading role in *Carnal Knowledge* (1971), the solo job that tore up their team. In this acclaimed hit, Nichols again plays on Garfunkel's boyishness, this time curdling it as his character declines into droopy-moustached middle-age with a much younger girlfriend, alongside Jack Nicholson's bitterly misogynist college pal. Far more shockingly acerbic than anything he'd sung, this was how Garfunkel asserted his creativity. Nominated for a Golden Globe as Best Actor, his solo singing debut was deferred until September 1973, when **Angel Clare** followed Simon's first two long-players into the US Top 5.

> The rhythmic skip and warm caress of his voice suit Osibisa's "Woyaya" on *Angel Clare*

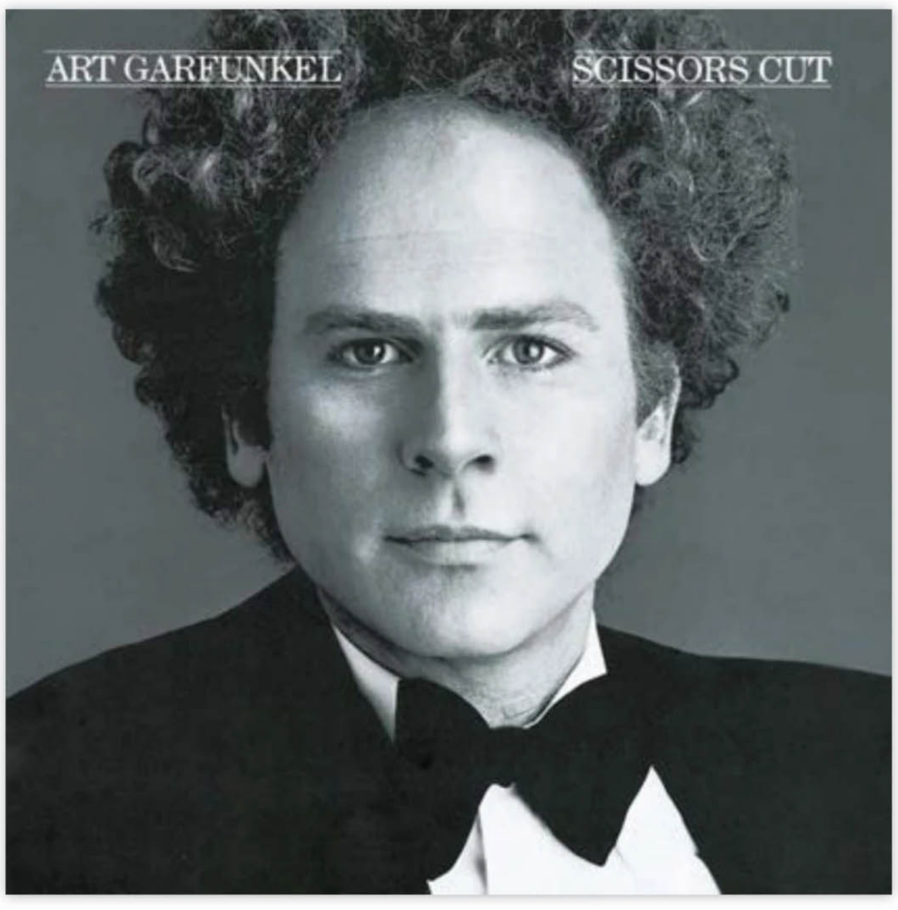
With Roy Halee reassuringly retained as co-producer, Garfunkel's arranging and vocal talents are fully expressed on what is a lavishly crafted record. Often seeming to protest too much about his creative participation in Simon's songs, *Angel Clare* appears designed to prove his point, as he adds sufficient detail to be its auteur. Abrasive clangs of acoustic guitar and curls of woodwind introduce the opener "Traveling Boy". Simon and Jerry Garcia then guest on the baroque bluegrass murder ballad "Down in the Willow Garden", before the high romance of the folk tragedy "Barbara Allen" showcases Garfunkel's vocal mastery of emotional narrative. His voice's rhythmic skip and warm caress suit Osibisa's "Woyaya", while Randy Newman's "Old Man" has its lyrical chill half-drowned in strings, but its chordal interest teased out. In this panoply of Simon replacements, Jimmy Webb stands tall. His "All I Know" was a Top 10 hit, and matches Garfunkel's sensibility more certainly than anything else here. "*I bruise you, you bruise me, we both bruise too easily*," he sings, unleashing the tremulous legato which even on "Bridge Over Troubled Water" suggested his vulnerability, as if his vocal strength isn't sure.

That is perhaps the secret of his singing, and self, both going deeper than surface prettiness. He once told me: "I think much of life is mediocre, me

ART GARFUNKEL · BREAKAWAY

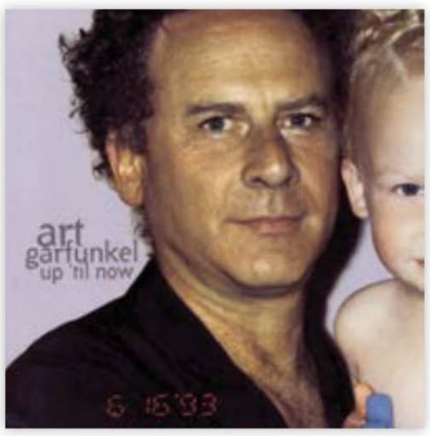
ART GARFUNKEL · WATERMARK ·

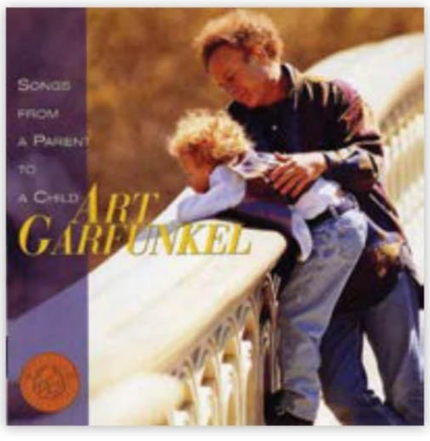
ART
GARFUNKEL
FATE FOR
BREAKFAST

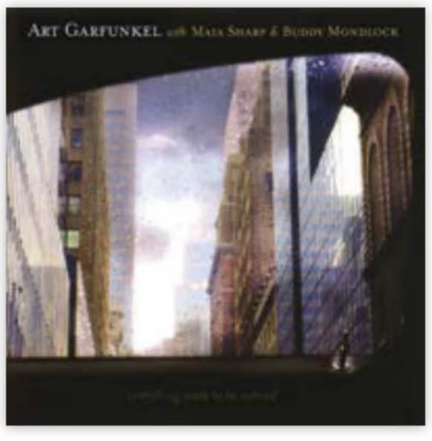

ART GARFUNKEL
SCISSORS CUT

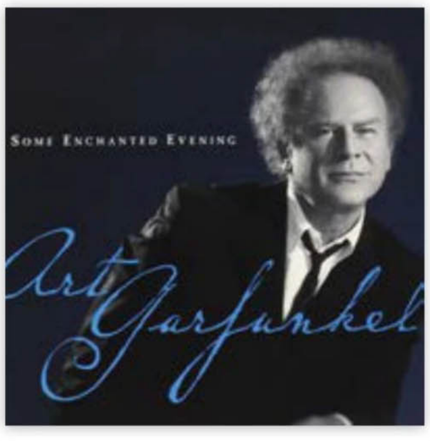
GARFUNKEL & GRANT
THE ANIMALS' CHRISTMAS BY JIMMY WEBB
A CLASSIC CHRISTMAS GIFT
THREE MUSICAL LEGENDS

ART
GARFUNKEL
LEFTY


art
garfunkel
up 'til now


Songs
from
a Parent
to
a Child
ART
GARFUNKEL


Art Garfunkel with Maia Sharp & Buddy Mondlock


Some Enchanted Evening
Art Garfunkel

and everything. Being alive is an awkward thing for me. I'm not that comfortable in my skin. I don't think I ever was." This Artie is in the soft-skinned lover of "All I Know", and the almost unbearable sensitivity with which he sings, "*Young man, I think you're dying*", and every other shivered word on "Barbara Allen".

Reassured by a hit album, he dispensed with Halee to co-produce 1975's **Breakaway** with the more relaxed Richard Perry, the right-hand man of another compositionally challenged '70s star, Ringo Starr. The sleeve surely gave Leonard Cohen's *Death Of A Ladies' Man* ideas two years later, as Garfunkel sits at a booze-laden table between two actresses, his girlfriend Laurie Bird and the deeply bohemian Helena Kallianiotes (who was also hanging out that year on Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue). After his workaholic '60s success, he fondly recalled, "I discovered LA. I discovered I liked partying all hours. I was besotted by Laurie Bird."

Breakaway was therefore a "supreme make-out album", made in part while camped out at the Chateau Marmont. The album's UK No 1, "I Only Have Eyes For You", is all loping bass and vocal glide, the latter recorded in one take in Mayfair. Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Waters of March" similarly shows how bossa nova suits Garfunkel's soft lilt. "Looking for the Right One", the drowsy "99 Miles From LA" and "The Same Old Tears On A New Background" further suggest a convincing, gently yearning persona for the '70s during this airy album, which finds Garfunkel's punctilious touch at its lightest.

The exception is its big US hit, "My Little Town", a Simon donation released on his *Still Crazy After All These Years* too, and as a Simon & Garfunkel single. "So Artie, you've come crawling back," Simon smirked when they performed it on the second episode of *Saturday Night Live*. Garfunkel was in on the joke, and let Simon direct the record's glowering piano, mild funk update on their sound, and deliberate desecration of Simon & Garfunkel-style Americana. In this hometown, "*it's just imagination they lack*", leaving the protagonist "*twitching like a finger on the trigger of a gun*" to escape.

Watermark (1977) showed commercial decline and strengthened intent, as Garfunkel produced an album of Jimmy Webb songs drawn from his own archive of Webb demos. It was a "highly esoteric... major work", Webb believed – at least until it stiffed, requiring its reissue with a soporific cover of "(What A Wonderful World" featuring Simon and James Taylor. Though Garfunkel doesn't attempt the grandeur of Glen Campbell, Webb's existential romance and offbeat urbanity suit his quiveringly sensitive wit and intellect. He admired Webb's "countryish melodies and his Baptist Church piano lines", he'd once explained. "Crying In My Sleep" now speaks to Garfunkel's decadent Californian life as its protagonist "*smoked his first pack of cigarettes today... put half a case away, took a sleeping pill*". And who can resist a '70s antihero who, when the female operator asks if she can help, responds, "*No thanks, baby...*" Then "Saturday Suit" offers lines like this: "*Put on your makeup and I'll shine my shoes/I know that it's Monday but I'm tired of the blues*." This is attractively adult easy listening, confirming Webb as Garfunkel's finest Simon stand-in. Like Sinatra's showcase of Jake Holmes songs, *Watertown* (1970), it's a singer's conceptual statement through another's music.

The fashionable quiet storm soul sound blowing through much of **Fate For Breakfast** (1979) offers more to Smokey Robinson fans than Simon & Garfunkel's. Yet this makeover has surprising suitability for Garfunkel the versatile balladeer, revealed by his voice's frictionless, Smokey-like caress on "Miss You Nights". The album's version of "Bright Eyes", meanwhile, is a darkling folk ballad. Mike Batt's earlier single version, heard by a generation of traumatised British children as the theme to *Watership Down*'s bloodily mangled cartoon rabbits, is simply great pop, as Garfunkel's glowing falsetto floats dreamily towards a "*river of death*". His second UK chart-topper made *Fate For Breakfast* a smash too, though both crashed in the States.

All of this was incidental to Garfunkel, when set against his own sudden trauma. His third film, Nicolas Roeg's *Bad Timing*, was his major creative project that year. He plays a repressed psychiatrist whose destructive obsession with Theresa Russell's character ends with him raping her when she's comatose after a suicidal overdose. "Someone told me that he was a rather good mathematician," Roeg told me of casting Garfunkel, rather than a more regular star. "He was very much a man of the world... cultured and intellectual." But as the dangerous "atmosphere of the film" took over, Roeg recalled, Garfunkel's character's poised shell, and his own, were both cracked open. "Nic Roeg asked a semi-insanity from me," Garfunkel confirmed to me. And afterwards? "I was wracked and ruined. When it was over I had all of my creative energy spent. I lost my girlfriend, Laurie Bird, at home, through suicide, right around that time. So when you say how did you feel afterward – I never got to feeling."

Two years later, Simon & Garfunkel's Central Park triumph offered a lift, just after **Scissors Cut**'s release. With Roy Halee back co-producing, "A Heart In New York" emulated the duo's folky sound and sentiment, and Simon guests on the teenage reverie "In Cars", which ends with Garfunkel's drift into "Scarborough Fair". Elsewhere, lush orchestrations and the singer's taste for American Songbook-style craft in contemporary writers highlight how he has abandoned the rock world. It's left to Webb's title track to show how depression at Bird's death had overwhelmed him. Sounding heavy and slow with regret, he sings: "*She goes and we will miss her.*"

Once the Simon & Garfunkel album *Think Too Much* was abandoned by Simon, Garfunkel let his career go for a while. **The Animals' Christmas** (1986), again written by Webb, saw the Nativity from the manger menagerie's point of view, and appealed for its distance from commerce. His still romantic and perfectionist nature found him preparing its orchestral arrangements in Scarborough's ruined fort, papers fluttering in the North Sea wind. Geoff Emerick co-produced a contemplative and musically complex record, returning for **Lefty** (1988). Though sometimes sullied by '80s production, this includes an appealingly breezy James Taylor duet, "I Wonder Why", and "The Promise", a melancholy jewel hoarded since Garfunkel met its writer Nick Holmes during his early Greenwich Village days, its dreamy melodic shifts stretched and sighed over by the singer.

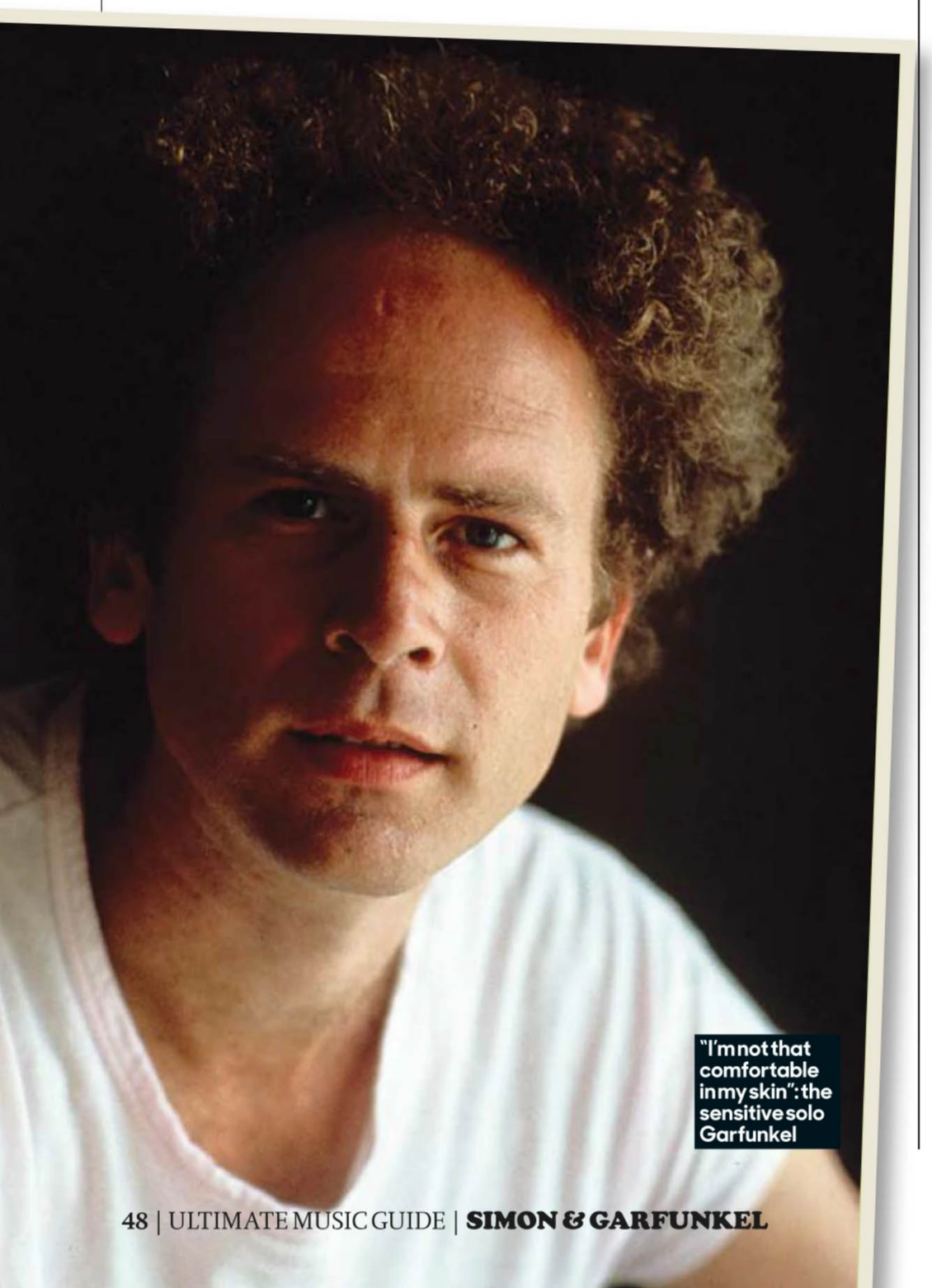
Up 'Til Now (1993) is a grab-bag of film themes and stray

CRITICS' VERDICTS

ANGEL CLARE
"'Art' Garfunkel's first solo album is a rather dainty experience... Nothing has been spared in the production, and the taste is impeccable, in the arrangements and choice of material."
Michael Watts, Melody Maker, September 29, 1973

BREAKAWAY
"On his second solo attempt, Garfunkel is looser and less restricted in his arrangements. He has dropped much of the severe formality that seemed present on *Angel Clare* and the result is a fresher approach."
Chris Charlesworth, Melody Maker, October 18, 1975

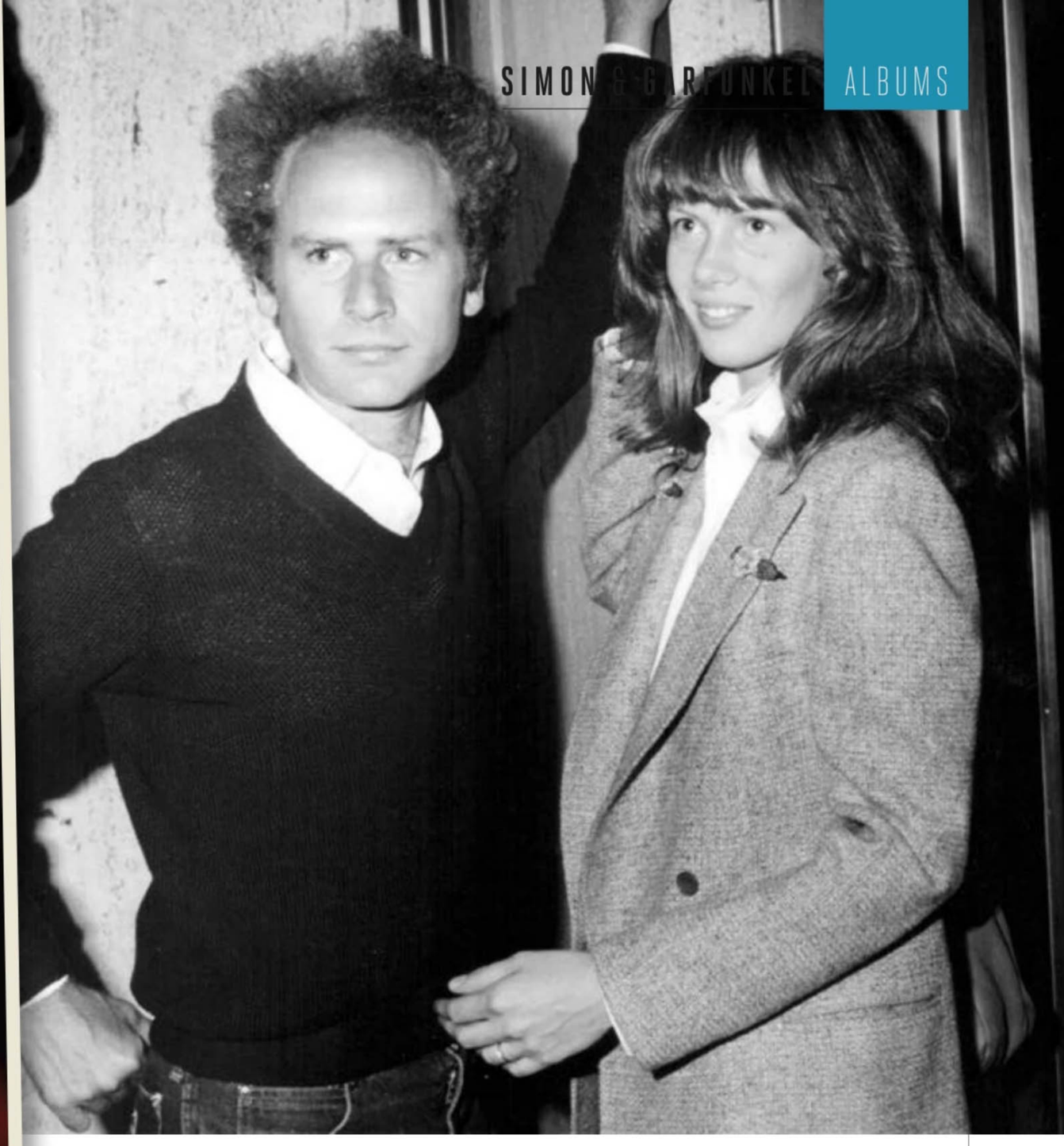
"If Art Garfunel has a voice like an angel, then this album confirms that there'll be musak in Heaven. Sweet, pure, inocent, sublime muzak no doubt. Just the sort of taped music you'd expect to hear in the cocktail lunge of the Eternal Hilton. But it's true there are moments of great beauty on *Breakaway*."
Bob Edmands, NME, October 25, 1975



"I'm not that comfortable in my skin": the sensitive solo Garfunkel

GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS

Presenting "a convincing, gently yearning persona": Garfunkel on stage during his solo tour, 1975



"I was besotted by Laurie Bird": with the actress/photographer at the Century Plaza Hotel, LA, June 1978

sessions. Finally confronting the American Songbook itself with "Two Sleepy People", Garfunkel conjures a beautiful expression of mature mid-century love "*by the Frigidaire*", his vocal sugared just enough. "Skywriter" is a minor Webb variation on "Wichita Lineman". Best is the spoken-word "The Breakup", in which he and Simon satirise their relationship with parodic pomposity ("*This is Arthur Garfunkel. Once of Simon & Garfunkel...*" "*Artie, try and make it a bit more... grave*"). Garfunkel's three-year-old son James peers from the sleeve, evidence of renewed happiness with second wife Kathryn Cermack. James forgivably recalls Shirley Temple more than dad when asked to sing on **From A Father To A Child** (1997), an indulgent album for baby-boomer parents. Its highlights are a buoyant take on Motown's "You're a Wonderful One" with Billy Preston and Merry Clayton, and the hymn Garfunkel's voice was made for, "Morning Has Broken".

Something like a studio renaissance finally came with **Everything Waits To Be Noticed** (2002), a collaboration with songwriters Maia Sharp and Buddy Mondlock in which Garfunkel poems become his first lyrics. This crucial innovation comes into its own on "The Thread", an autobiographical New York triptych decoded in his compilation *The Singer*'s liner notes. Its first section alludes to Simon in 1962, its second to church prayers during more than 300 "Bridge Over Troubled Water" takes. And at last, it is 1979, as *Bad Timing*'s closing scene is shot, Theresa Russell's character passing Garfunkel with her failed suicide's "tiny scar", following Laurie Bird's death. "Beyond irony," Garfunkel wrote. Such loaded particulars are buried, as another lilting bossa nova melody dances on. "Wishbone" is more naked: "*I wish to God you were still alive.*"

> Though it apparently sits in the middle of the road, Garfunkel's voice proves inexhaustibly interesting

Some Enchanted Evening (2007) concludes Garfunkel's recordings to date by presenting him, somewhat inevitably, as a more credible crooner than Rod Stewart. Richard Perry's slick production is a hindrance, but Garfunkel investigates the Songbook with his usual thoroughness, unpicking melodies, and finding new beauty here and there.

It is a restrained body of work, the product of a privately emotional man. Though it apparently sits in the middle of the road, Garfunkel's voice proves inexhaustibly interesting. "I do songs that have a lyric content," he told me, "mostly due to Paul Simon. But I've recorded many things since working with Paul, and the lyric and the thoughtfulness or the tenderness requires more variation." His character authors every word. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Art Garfunkel: The Solo Years

Angel Clare
7/10 ★★★
Label: CBS, 1973
Produced by: Art Garfunkel and Roy Halee
Charts: UK 14; US 5

Breakaway
6/10 ★★★
Label: CBS, 1975
Produced by: Art Garfunkel and Richard Perry
Charts: UK 7; US 9

Watermark
7/10 ★★★
Label: CBS, 1978
Produced by: Art Garfunkel (and Phil Ramone on "Wonderful World")
Charts: UK 25; US 19

Fate For Breakfast
6/10 ★★★
Label: CBS, 1979
Produced by: Louie Shelton
Charts: UK 2; US 67

Scissors Cut
6/10 ★★★
Label: CBS, 1981
Produced by: Art Garfunkel and Roy Halee
Charts: UK 51; US 113

The Animals' Christmas (with Amy Grant)
6/10 ★★★
Label: CBS, 1986
Produced by: Art Garfunkel, Jimmy Webb and Geoff Emerick
Charts: UK –; US –

Lefty
5/10 ★★
Label: CBS, 1988
Produced by: Geoff Emerick, Art Garfunkel, Jay Graydon and Steve Gadd
Charts: UK –; US –

Up 'Til Now
6/10 ★★★
Label: Columbia, 1993
Produced by: Art Garfunkel (and Don Grolnick and James Taylor on "Crying In The Rain")
Charts: UK –; US –

Songs From A Father To A Child
5/10 ★★
Label: Columbia, 1997
Produced by: Art Garfunkel
Charts: UK –; US –

Everything Waits To Be Noticed
6/10 ★★★
Label: Blue Note, 2002
Produced by: Billy Mann
Charts: UK –; US –

Some Enchanted Evening
5/10 ★★
Label: Atco, 2007
Produced by: Richard Perry
Charts: UK –; US –

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES; FRANK EDWARDS/ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

Setting the bench mark for singers: Art Garfunkel, Embankment Gardens, London, October 3, 1975

SYDNEY O'MEARA/EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES

"I feel confident on my own"

Sharing songs and release dates with his former partner, **ART GARFUNKEL** approaches his second solo record with a burgeoning film career and bewildering past successes to discuss. A Simon & Garfunkel reunion is "perfectly logical" he tells **CHRIS CHARLESWORTH**, but why break up in the first place? "Something to do with us thinking, 'Why not split up?'"

MM | 11/10/1975

ART GARFUNKEL cut an odd dash at the *Top Of The Pops* rehearsals last week. Slotted between Pan's People and Mud and closely followed by Jonathan King, he seemed a proverbial fish out of water, not only because he is American, but because his gentle approach to music and the care that he obviously takes when recording is not always apparent on this particular gem from the BBC.

But Artie stood up and sang his hit single, "I Only Have Eyes For You", looking calm and composed and apparently satisfied with the backing he received from the *TOTP* Orchestra. And one of Pan's People was overheard to say, somewhat indiscreetly, Artie was her kind of guy.

Garfunkel is indeed a curious product of the music industry, an educated and rather conservative young man with a golden voice who has yet to write a note or lyric and put it on record. The less-admiring might well conclude that he is a very fortunate man whose association with a composer of Paul Simon's talents was directly responsible for earning him a vast fortune. Others rightly consider that his pure, tenor voice was an essential element to the formula that turned Simon and Garfunkel into the most successful duo to have emerged in the history of recorded music.

The blond, slightly balding Garfunkel is a contrary fellow who has taken a fair share of knocks through being, quite literally, on the flip side of that partnership.

Last week he spent three days in England. On the first he taped a slot for *Top Of The Pops*, on the second he gave a press conference at the Savoy Hotel and the third was spent "privately". He obliged photographers by posing with pigeons for a photo-call and refused to be drawn by national press reporters into condemning the Bay City Rollers.

Like a clean-cut Harvard Graduate in Law, Garfunkel dealt diplomatically with a number of questions that were designed to irritate. He

Copped: Art appears on a US TV show, 1975

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

wouldn't say whether he was earning less money than Paul Simon, although anyone with the slightest knowledge of the music industry would realise that Simon's publishing royalties as the writer of their material would obviously put Simon in a different bracket.

He chose to do one other interview – with the *MM*, which, he decided, would take place in his car, a Daimler limousine, while being driven around London in search of open spaces where the sunset could be viewed to the best advantage. In the car with him was his American girlfriend, actress Laurie Bird, who snuggled up close for the entire ride. Their mutual affection was obvious.

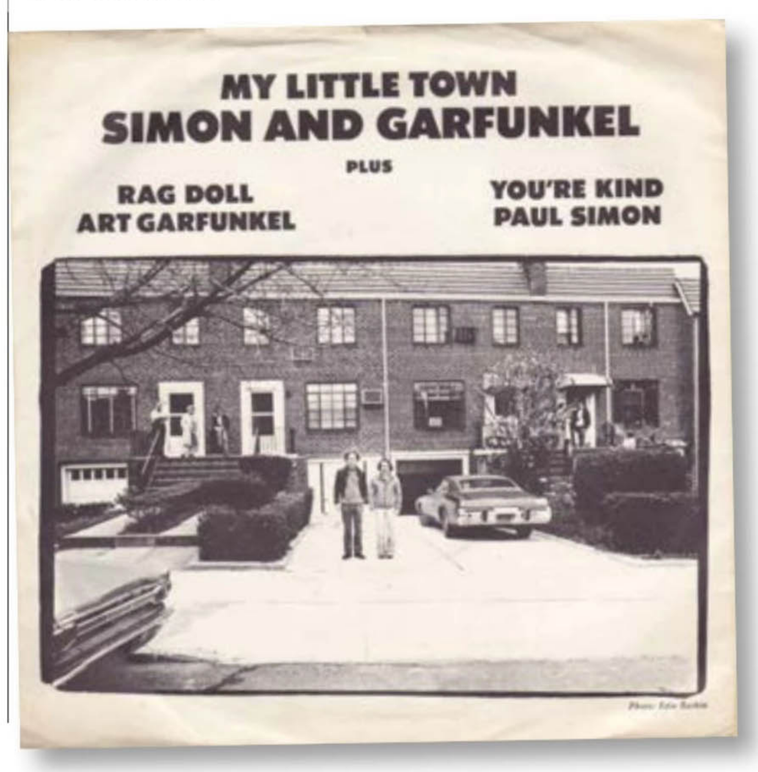
Next week sees the release of Garfunkel's second solo album, *Breakaway*, which hits the shops at exactly the same time as the fourth Paul Simon solo album, if one includes his live record with the Jesse Dixon Singers and Urubamba. Garfunkel's latest is produced by Richard Perry, of Ringo Starr fame, and it is the first break he has had from the legendary S&G producer Roy Halee. And the choice of material is interesting too: included are versions of Stevie Wonder's "I Believe (When I Fall In Love, It'll Be Forever)" and Bruce Johnson's beautiful "Disney Girls" from The Beach Boys' *Surf's Up* set.

There's a Paul Simon song on the record, too, titled "My Little Town" on which the pair duet together for the first time since "Bridge Over Troubled Water". Curiously, the same track is also on the new Simon album.

But two years seems a long time to record an album and it was here that we started our conversation, Garfunkel denying that this time span was overlong. "I don't think it's a long time to make an album. I've spent the last two years doing a lot of things. I bought a house in Virginia and I've spent eight months making a second solo album which has taken most of this year so far."

We'll try a different tack. How come Richard Perry became involved? "I called him," said Artie, giving little away. "I began to feel that I wanted to make an album without Roy Halee for the sake of it... just as a learning experience, and I called Richard because he was one of the people that I have a good opinion of as a record producer.

"I recorded with other people and I did some stuff on my own and I did a tune in London with Paul Samwell-Smith, but when I started working with Richard I began to look upon the recording as an album."



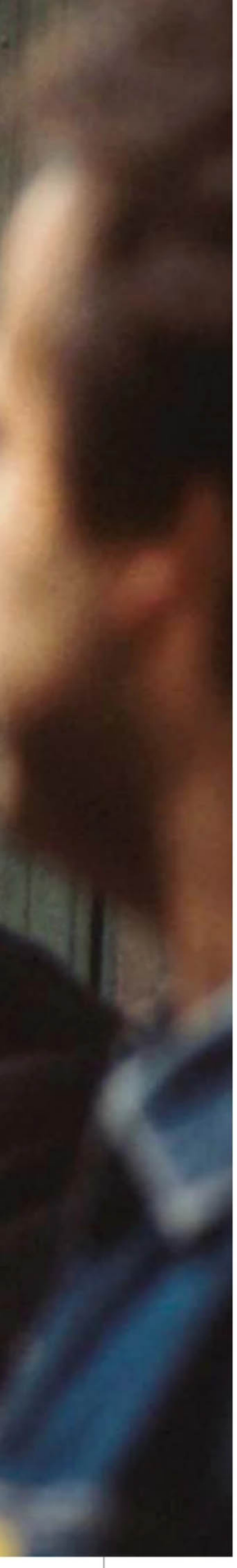
How do you pick the material? "It was anything I could get off on. That's a question that doesn't really have an answer unless there was some concept that defined how I pick material. I just pick whatever I feel like singing."

Pushing a little now, I suggested that the inclusion of a Paul Simon song would seem to indicate a possible reunion. "Yes, it would seem to indicate that," Art responded. "I'm going as far as your statement and it's perfectly logical.

"There is a chance that we might get together to record an album, but I really can't say any more because there is no more answer. It was good to work with him again because I like him and I think he's talented.

"He had this song that he was working on and it looked like he wasn't going to use it on his album and he knew that I liked the song because I knew it in an earlier form. I told him I'd take it because I was making an album railed from all forms of music and, certainly, a Paul Simon song would be of interest to me. I started working on the song knowing all the while that Paul Simon, not being too prolific a writer, was probably going to need the song himself. Sure enough he figured later that it would be nice on his album, too, so we started working on a harmony version because I thought that the middle part was ideally suited to the old S&G blend and I felt like harmonising with Paul because I hadn't done that in years.

"We both got off on it and now we've put it on both his album and my own which are both coming out on the same day. Our schedules were so similar that, with a little bit of planning, we



could take advantage of the coincidence of it all."

Among the musicians who have worked with Garfunkel on the new album are Andrew Gould, who plays "everything," Larry Knechtel, Jim Keltner, Klaus Voormann, and Graham Nash and David Crosby who sing back-up vocals. Bruce Johnson is also featured singing in the background.

But it was Perry's idea to cut "I Only Have Eyes For You". "Oh, what a song," murmured Garfunkel in some awe when the subject was raised. "Richard has been wanting to do it for years, in fact, almost half the cuts on the album were specifically brought to my attention by him.

"There was a big difference, night and day. In fact, between working with Perry and Halee. Richard is a bolder, more adventurous producer. He's like a cowboy – he takes more chances and he'll set things up and cut them straight away. Roy Halee would spend far more time mic'ing the foot pedal or whatever and trying all the variations.

"In one sense you could say that spending all the extra time makes him a more careful artist, but Richard makes terrific records in a faster, shoot-from-the-hip, style. Roy comes out of the master-works department of Columbia Records so he's an engineer and particularly a sound man. He's very conservative. It would be unheard of for him to accept a tape with ticks or pops or anything like that."

WHILE Paul Simon has appeared live in concert both in America and Europe since their split, Garfunkel has yet to make an appearance before the public on stage. Live work, he said, is not his first priority. "I've had my mind on other things. Firstly, I have a rich and active personal life and secondly, musically, I've chosen to spend my time in the recording studio. If I was going to do any touring, I would have had to take something away from that.

"I have a rough idea of what kind of show I'd do, but I haven't worked on it yet. But there's a chance of it happening next year. Probably a tour of small places."

Bridge Over Troubled Water, the album, has to date sold more than nine million copies. Currently it's vying for the best sales yet slot with *The Sound Of Music* which, of course, was released some years before. Had Garfunkel ever wondered why this particular album should register such freak sales figures.

"I didn't think it was that much better than our other albums. I thought *Bookends* was a good album too. I don't think *Bridge*... was so different from the others to justify the extra sales. I have to say that diversity of appeal might have accounted for it. I know that some of the people who bought it are mums and dads types and some others are 12-year-olds. It was cognisant of a lot of different kinds of tastes and it had a wide appeal. 'Cecilia' was an uptempo song, 'Bridge...' itself was an anthem-like ballad, 'Frank Lloyd Wright' was a kind of bossa nova and there was brass on some tracks. It just appealed to all kinds of different people."

Had Art, the original "Bridge..." vocalist, any opinions on Paul's live version which has been recorded? "I know if I say anything at all and it's not tactful you'll lift it out of context and it'll be the headline," he said with a grin. "You want me to say something that is in the least possible taste... well, I like our version of 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' better than Paul's solo version."

"Paul's heartbeat is a lot faster than mine. He is more neurotic and needs to achieve"

Art Garfunkel

How come Paul has been more active since the break-up. "First of all Paul's heartbeat is a lot faster than mine. He is more neurotic than I am and he needs to achieve new things more than I do. I can sit back and eat a peach and I don't have the urge to work that he does.

"I miss him not writing songs for me to sing, although I never felt he was writing for me specifically in the past. When I make an album now I miss the quality of his lyrics and his chord changes and melodies. I still have a great regard for his writing."

Which brought us back to THAT question. "Well, I definitely would not rule out the possibility of us appearing together again, but at the present I don't have any specific plans to do a tour with Paul so it's one of those things where there's no reason why not but there's just no plans to do it."

"I feel confident on my own. I did not feel that I was missing anything when I started working on my own three years ago on the first recordings on *Angel Clare*. I would have enjoyed Paul's musical attributes and it would have been a much better record if I could have used the resources he would have brought, but I didn't feel the lack of Paul."

Why did you break up in the first place? A long pause... "Well, something to do with the movie *Catch-22* and Mike Nichols; something to do with two different schedules, something to do with a little bit of excitement being off the album-making process... it was a little less fresh than it used to be... something to do with us thinking, 'Why not split up?'... everybody out there thinks it's a crazy thing to do, but why not, it seems like an interesting thing to do to separate things for a while.

"We never set out to accomplish anything as Simon & Garfunkel. We had no conscious goal except to make records and hope they were popular. We worked very hard and some of the things that amazed me were how one gets so popular and how the popularity process works. I must also say that it amazed me that some of our records sold as much as they did, that they were that popular. It seemed sort of freakish, but it didn't amaze me that we caught on and became a popular act, because I simply thought we were good."

Immediately after the split; Garfunkel played leading roles in two films, *Catch-22* and *Carnal Knowledge*. Did he intend to carry on his film career? "In a broad way, yes, but I have no specific plans. I wasn't all that satisfied with my performances in the films and, in fact, I preferred *Two-Lane Black Top* of them all.

"I'm still offered scripts, but I used to be offered more than I am now because I've kept turning everything down. It's just another form of expression that I am really happy to avail myself of. To express yourself in the creative arts by going and making a film is a terrific change from making records and I'd love to do it again.

"I prefer singing, though." ●

Meeting the Thin White Duke: Bowie, Garfunkel and Simon at the 17th Annual Grammy Awards, NYC, March 1, 1975

RONGALELLA/RONGALELLA COLLECTION VIA GETTY IMAGES

RELEASED: 25 OCTOBER | **1975**

Still Crazy After All These Years

Washing away the heartache with melody, "Mr Alienation" turns tear-streaked clown. Definitely not a turkey. **BY JASON ANDERSON**

THE sound of "Still Crazy After All These Years" will forever be married to the sight of Paul Simon in a turkey suit. The association stems from an iconic bit on a 1976 episode of *Saturday Night Live* that opens with the singer arriving on stage in full American Thanksgiving regalia. He only makes it a few bars into the title track of his fourth solo album before stopping to express his misgivings about the whole thing.

"You know, I felt it was not in any way in keeping with my image, the lyrics, 'The Boxer', any of these songs. They said, 'Hey, you know, you take yourself *soooo* seriously. Why don't you stop taking yourself *soooo* seriously for a while and loosen up a little bit, and maybe people will laugh. You want to be Mr Alienation, you can be Mr Alienation.'" The singer's humiliation is confirmed when he gets stuck in the door on the way out.

A highlight of Simon's decades-long association with *SNL*, the bit was both hilarious and astute. Like his turn as a record producer in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* the following year, the appearance demonstrated Simon's skills as a comedic actor. And by inviting people to chuckle over his misfortunes in such a ridiculous fashion, he was only doing a broader version of what he achieved on *Still Crazy After All These Years*, a collection of songs whose irresistibly melodic and deceptively breezy nature masks a reservoir of pain.

In the wake of *Here Comes Rhymin' Simon*, the singer found himself mired in another bout of writer's block and other feelings that success had done little to abate. He'd spend long days and nights away from the apartment he shared with wife Peggy and then go straight to the shower upon returning. She thought he was trying to cover up an affair, but as he told biographer Robert Hilburn, it was sadness he was trying to wash away. Realising "the marriage didn't solve the loneliness", he and Peggy were soon kaput.

It was in one of those sad showers where he first thought of the phrase that got the new songs flowing. And despite the personal darkness that prompted it, "Still Crazy After All These Years" headed in a lighter direction. Part of that was down to Simon's producer Phil Ramone. His lush yet roomy production aesthetic and the increasing prominence of jazz players like Michael Brecker – responsible for the wistful tenor sax solo on "Still Crazy" – lent the album a looseness and smoothness that belied the underlying turbulence.

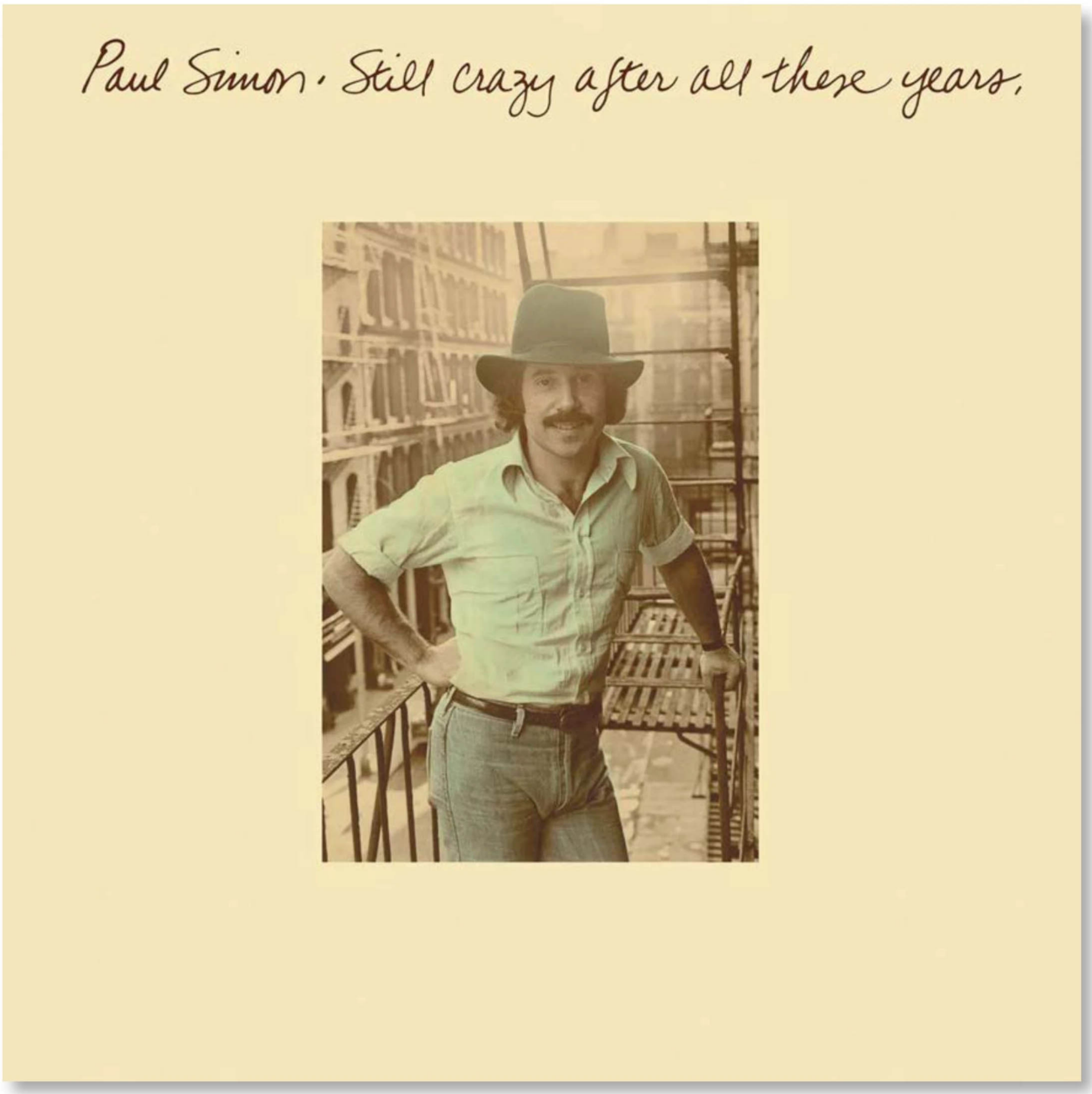
As for the lyrics for the title track, Simon shied away from the kind of heart-baring confessional expected from other singer-songwriters. With its situational, self-deprecating humour, the result sounded more like a scene in one of Allen's movies. The hurt and anger were still obvious in the chilling fourth verse. "*Now I sit by my window and watch the cars*," he sings. "*I fear I'll do some damage one fine day.*" It's moot whether his intentions are suicidal or homicidal when he claims, "*I will not be convicted by a jury of my peers.*" Either way, Mr Alienation clearly had some issues that needed to be raised with a qualified therapist.

In more new songs, Simon continued to express his despair and disappointment over his crumbling marriage. Sometimes he'd approach the subject directly, like in the plaintive "I Do It For Your Love" or "Some Folks' Lives Roll Easy". More often he'd do it with disarming humour, a quality that helped make "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover" Simon's only US No 1 hit as a solo artist. A cheeky take on his personal calamities, it developed out of a silly rhyming song Simon concocted for his son Harper, though chances are the original version wasn't so explicitly about his "*struggle to be free*" of the boy's mother. The dark-

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Instant opinion: *Blood On The Tracks* apart, *Still Crazy* is the best album you're likely to hear all year... A return to the bleakness of Simon's first post-Garfunkel solo album."
Bob Woffinden, NME, Oct 4, 1975

"A brilliantly produced album in the traditional Simon mould... He's the perfectionist's perfectionist, and once again he's produced a perfect album."
Chris Charlesworth, Melody Maker, Oct 18, 1975



hearted ditty owes much of its energy to the remarkably supple performance by drummer Steve Gadd.

He'd also take a break from contending with his own troubles by briefly reuniting with his old partner. Believing Art's musical direction had gone too soft on *Angel Clare*, Simon offered "a nasty song" to help toughen its follow-up (the song ended up on both of the records they released in 1975). The duo's first new song together since 1970, "My Little Town" is a punchy good-riddance to a hometown where the rainbows are all black and there's "*nothing but the dead and dying*". Simon and Garfunkel had differing opinions as to whether the kiss-off was specifically directed at Kew Gardens Hills, but they both delivered these spiteful sentiments with great vigour before resuming their separate trajectories.

That little town also sounds a lot like where we meet the ill-fated couple in "I Do It For Your Love", a place where "*the sky was yellow and the grass was grey*". More exuberant is "Gone At Last", a gospel-style rave-up Simon had recorded as a duet with Bette Midler before redoing it with Phoebe Snow. It too assumes the style of a comedy sketch when Snow is given the chance to respond to Simon's lamentations about his luck. "*I don't fall too easily*," Snow roared, "*but that boy looked so dejected/He just grabbed my sympathy.*" She might've felt even worse if she'd seen him in the turkey suit.

The humour in "Have A Good Time" is more of the cynical variety favoured by Randy Newman and Steely Dan. The narrator could be one of the latter duo's deluded losers, a man who keeps his blinders on lest he notices the wreckage around him. "*Maybe I'm blind to the fate of mankind but what can be done?*" Simon croons, his cool-cat pose accentuated by Hugh McCracken's sly guitar licks.

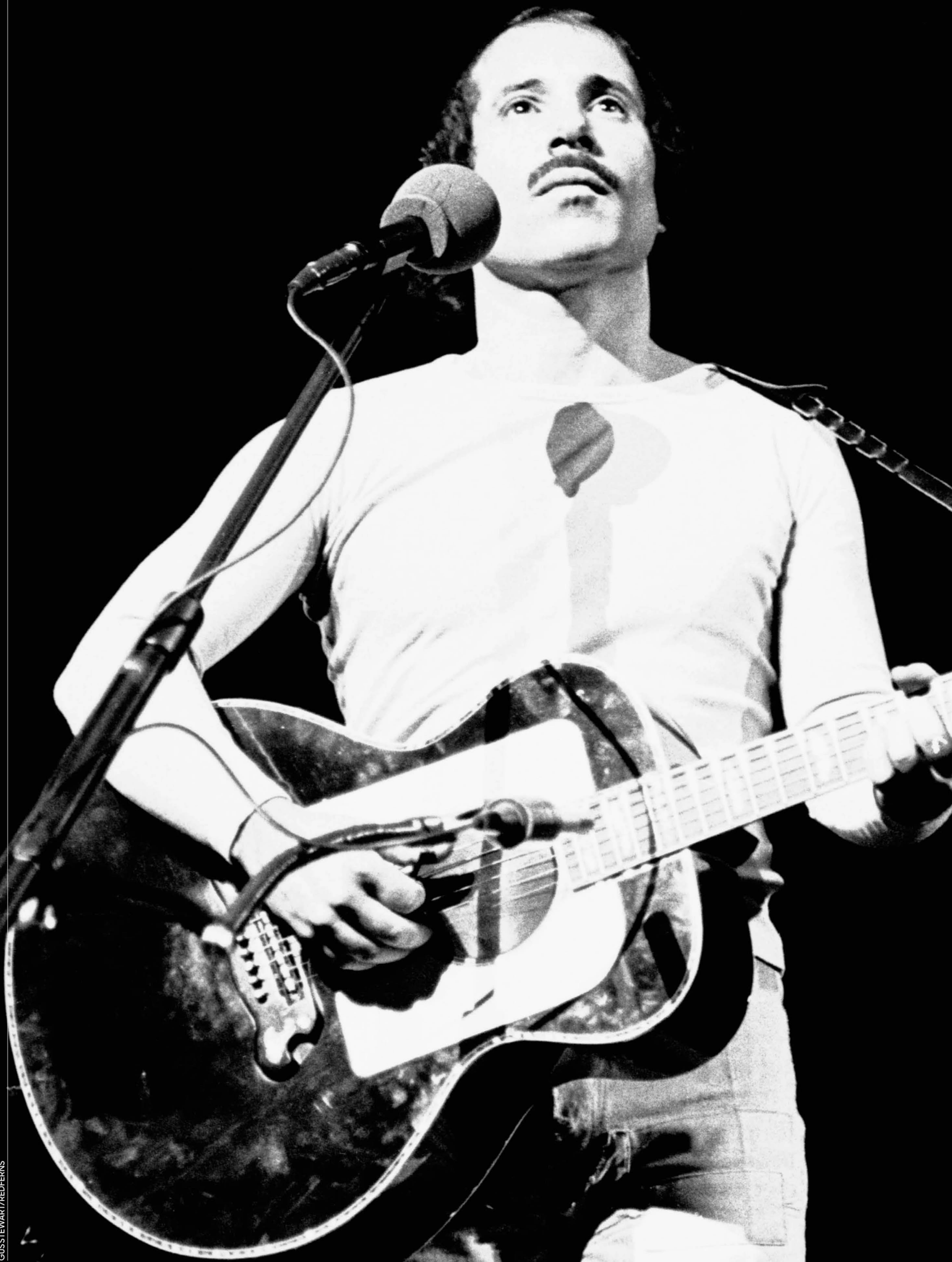
> A set of songs whose breezy nature masks a reservoir of pain

Simon sounds more sincerely bereft on the haunting closer "Silent Eyes", one of several songs whose gospel trappings include a plea to the Lord above. The singer makes no effort to disguise his woe in lines like, "*Sorrow, she burns like a flame/And she calls my name.*" But somehow the song – a precursor to the baroque pop balladry Ramone would later craft with Billy Joel – is too vivid to be a downer. Even the flagrantly morose "Night Game" is funny in its own way, Simon presenting the story of a baseball pitcher dying on the mound in the eighth inning as a piece of pitch-black comedy. With a musical setting that evokes a jazz cabaret at the end of an exhausting evening, "Night Game" could have been a fitting choice for Frank Sinatra's *In The Wee Small Hours*. *Still Crazy...* belongs next to it in the canon of classic break-up albums that try to sound casual about heartbreak. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Still Crazy After All These Years

1. Still Crazy After All These Years ★★★★★
2. My Little Town ★★★★
3. I Do It For Your Love ★★★★
4. 50 Ways To Leave Your Lover ★★★★
5. Night Game ★★★
6. Gone At Last ★★★
7. Some Folks' Lives Roll Easy ★★★
8. Have A Good Time ★★★
9. You're Kind ★★★★
10. Silent Eyes ★★★★

Label: Columbia
Produced by: Paul Simon and Phil Ramone
Recorded at: A&R Recordings, New York
Personnel includes: Paul Simon (vocals, acoustic guitar, elec gtr, horn and string arr), Kenneth Ascher (organ, piano), Patti Austin (backing vocals), Joe Beck (elec gtr), Barry Beckett (keys), Michael Brecker (tenor sax), Pete Carr (elec gtr), Eddie Daniels (sax), Gordon Edwards (bass), Jerry Friedman (elec gtr), Steve Gadd (drums), Art Garfunkel (vocals), Roger Hawkins (drums), David Hood (bass), Bob James (keys), Tony Levin (bass)
Highest chart position: US 1; UK 6



GUS STEWART/REDFERNS

"I am crazy, yes"

No wonder. Five years after his split with Garfunkel and with a fourth solo album, *Still Crazy After All These Years*, **PAUL SIMON** is still being pressed on the bewildering success of *Bridge Over Troubled Water* and the chances of a reunion with Art. "I wouldn't say I miss him," he tells CHRIS CHARLESWORTH, "but I remember I like it, when I'm singing with him again…"

Still solo after all these years: Simon live at the London Palladium, December 11, 1975

MM 22/11/1975

PAUL SIMON is the most commercially successful performing singer-songwriter to come out of America in the past 15 years and, with inflation running at its present rate, probably ever.

Perhaps that is a sweeping statement, but the only real contender in the race is Bob Dylan. While Dylan may have brought about more innovations and attracted more attention with his personality, style and occasional controversy, a glance at Columbia's account books will reveal that Simon, with his massive following of all ages, stands in a class by himself.

For few artists in contemporary music present such a tiny facade as Simon, who, over the past ten years, has steadily perfected a talent that was as apparent when "I Am A Rock" was released as it is today.

He has matured at a steady rate, gradually developing his music through a variety of influences that have become far wider since his split with Art Garfunkel in 1970.

By close attention to detail and a quiet, unhurried attitude towards his work, Simon – unlike many of his contemporaries – simply hasn't made a wrong move. Eleven albums, excluding a package of hits, carry his name and it's difficult to find a weak spot on any of them.

The only criticism he has borne over the years is that he is a cold performer, a perfectionist with no soul, a kind of computerised writer. But this was surely proved wrong with his live recording two years ago. Versions of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" and "The Sound Of Silence" recorded with the Jesse Dixon Singers simply glowed with a burning fire. As a singer-songwriter, Paul Simon rests in a category of his own, seemingly able to continue producing records that always surpass others of a like genre.

Currently he is playing concerts throughout the US, visiting far-off cities on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and returning to New York in the week.

He lives in New York and spends most of his time in midtown Manhattan where he keeps an apartment. As much time as possible is spent with his three-year-old son. Simon is due to play in London next month.

"Almost all my albums have the same balance, which is about five slow and five fast"

Paul Simon

Paul Simon is a physically unassuming man, very short, with broad shoulders and hair brushed forward to cover growing baldness over his forehead. He wears a bushy moustache these days, but his face would be unrecognisable in any crowd. He still resembles a college student: a long scarf and a pile of worn books would complete the picture perfectly.

He is, of course, extremely wealthy, even by rock standards.

It would be difficult to hazard a guess at the royalties he earned from the *Bridge Over Troubled Water* album, but the song alone should have earned him enough money on which to retire.

And, of course, there are 10 other gold records on his wall.

Bridge has, to date, sold almost 10 million copies – a gigantic figure by any standards. The only other album to match it is the soundtrack from *The Sound Of Music*.

Despite all this, Paul remains a quiet, unpretentious, shy little guy. He smiles a lot, talks in a gentle voice and, occasionally, seems somewhat baffled by his own success.

This interview took place at the office of his publishing company on East 61st Street last week.

The walls of the reception room were plastered not only with gold discs, but with awards and citations from all manner of musical bodies and at least half a dozen Grammys, the music industry equivalent of the film industry's Oscar.

What material are you playing on this tour?
I'm doing a lot of new material. I do eight out of the 10 songs on the new album, all except "Night Game" and "Silent Eyes", five songs from my last album, two or three from the first solo album and about six from the Simon and Garfunkel period.

Which musicians back you up, and how did you find them?
The Jesse Dixon Singers are with me again, backing me up, but Urubamba (The South American musicians who played on "El Condor Pasa" on *Bridge*...) aren't with me this time.

Also, most of the guys that played on the new record with me, which is about 10 musicians and another four back-up singers. It's a big crew – I start out solo and gradually add until have the full group including a string quartet and some horns on stage too. That's how I, er... build the show up.

There's Steve Gadd on drums, Tony Levin plays bass, Hugh McCracken on guitar, Dave Sanborn on saxophone, Richard Tee on piano, Toots Thielmans plays some harmonica and some guitar, and Jesse and the group are still in there.

How did you find all these musicians?
Oh... you just come across guys and when you're congenial, you work well together and you book them again. There's a group of New York musicians that I use pretty regularly when I record and these guys are among them.

There're others, too, that I alternate with, but these guys did most of the last album with me.

Did *Still Crazy*... take a long time to make?
Yes. I spent a long time on this one. It's very hard to say how long I spent because I write as I record. It took about nine or 10 months, but not that long to record it as much as to write it and record it.

Like all your albums, it gives the impression of meticulous precision in the studio, spending hours and hours perfecting songs. Is that true?
I know they say that, but actually it is really not the case. I do not spend hours and hours.

A typical thing for me would be to book musicians for a double session which is six hours. They come in at, say, one o'clock in the afternoon and work until seven or eight o'clock at night when I've cut the track. That's usually the case.

Then after that I'll do my vocals and then I'll do my sweetening, adding strings or horns – whatever the sweetening is.

The only exception to that pattern would be if I failed in that day to cut the track the way I wanted, in which case I would do it again, and if I failed again I would do it again until I got it right.

Really that's not a question of being meticulous, it's just a question of... at a certain point the music becomes alive for me.

It's living and at that point, that's it. I certainly don't look to do anything perfectly. You can't do everything perfectly anyway. Perfection doesn't mean anything in music, you know.

A Simon and Garfunkel reunion on NBC TV show *Saturday Night*, New York, October 18, 1975

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

Collaborator Phoebe Snow, Teaneck, New Jersey, August 19, 1975

But I tend not to be *er*... too sloppy in my work. I tend to try and do a thing neatly the first time, rather than start to fix it up in the mix or add a lot of things later. The musicians I have been working with are so good at what they do that they get it right in a day.

How I work is to finish one song and then start work on another, rather than take them all into the studio at once. Usually I do two or three at once, but I never go into the studio before I've finished a song.

Then I try and balance the album. If I have, say, seven songs done, then I'll think that what this album needs now is an uptempo piano song or a guitar ballad or something light or whatever seems to be missing.

I try and balance the album... in fact, almost all my albums have the same balance, which is about five slow and five fast.

That's what I find to be the easiest to listen to... my ears say to me, "I've just heard this and now I'd like to hear this." and if it doesn't exist on that album yet, then I write it.

PHOEBE SNOW made an appearance on one track on this new album. How did that come about?

She was recording with Phil Ramone, who is my engineer, and that's how I met her. I was in the same studio as she was.

I heard her when she was recording her first album a long time ago and I thought she was great. I still think she's great. I asked her to come and do that song with me.

> **"I told Art I'd write a nasty song for him as a present for his album"**
>
> ***Paul Simon***

Art Garfunkel, too, is on the album on "My Little Town". What brought you back together for this one song?

That song was really meant for Artie's album. It wasn't really meant to be on mine. I gave that song to Artie.

I volunteered a nasty song because he hasn't been singing any nasty songs lately and a few people know there is that side to his nature. So I told him I'd write a nasty song for him as a present for his album. As I was teaching it to him, he sang the harmony and then asked me to sing on it with him.

Then he asked me how I'd feel if there was a Simon and Garfunkel track on his album and then said he thought it should be on both albums. It wasn't like he joined me on my album, it was really the reverse, but he just gave the song back to me. We chose to bring both our albums out at the same time because of that.

It would have been unfair to one album if the other came out first with a Simon and Garfunkel track on it. It would give whichever came first an unfair advantage in terms of demand for the album.

Did you enjoy working with Garfunkel again?

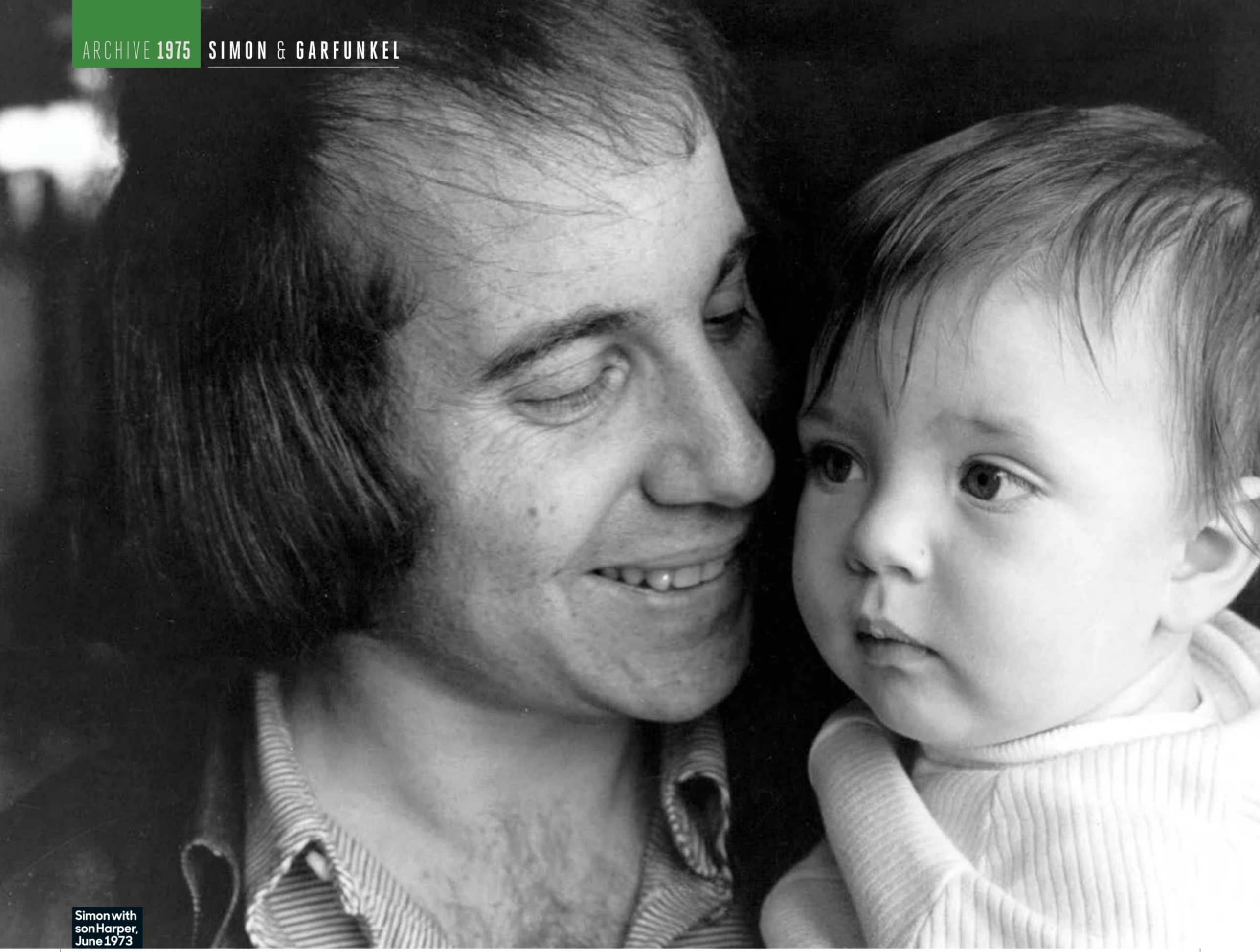
It was pleasant. A little tense at first, but after that very pleasant, and very easy to do.

Your songs often sound like personal anecdotes. Are they? Are you crazy after all this time?

They're personal but they're not autobiographical. I am crazy, yes, that particular title is autobiographical, but the character in the song is not me.

They're all drawn from my experiences but not really about me or things that

DAVID GAHR/GETTY IMAGES



Simon with son Harper, June 1973

specifically happened to me, none of them going all the way back.

As usual, there's one kind of novelty song, "50 Ways To Lose Your Lover".

I have a son who's three years old and I made up all those little rhymes for him because he likes rhymes. All those little lines in that would appeal to him, and the rest of the story was just a different approach to a love song.

Your love songs, in particular, sound very personal. Are you still aiming for the elusive Kathy or Emily who've already appeared in your songs?

Not really. I'm vaguely talking about my life but I'm not specifically talking about myself. There are bits and pieces that are like me and they reflect some of what's happening but not the entirety of the thing.

Playing almost a whole new album is a lot of new material to give an audience at one time. Are they all going down well, or do audiences still shout for your better-known songs?

They do seem to know them. They've been giving me that recognition applause at the beginning, so I feel they know them.

I thought that audiences might get restless but it doesn't appear to be the case. Obviously a significant proportion of the audience has already heard the songs on radio or bought the record already.

When you record, do you have lots of spare material left over?

No. I have none. I write 10 songs and that's when I stop. Every one is on the album. I've never ever had any excess. Perhaps there's one I haven't recorded that I can think of.

The great lost Paul Simon song?

It wasn't by any means great, not at all. It was a song that was supposed to be on the *Bridge*... album and it never got on because Artie and I had an argument over it. That's the only one I can remember and I never put it on anywhere. I think in retrospect it shouldn't have been on and it was a good move. By the time I finish a song, if I finish it, I'm usually satisfied enough to include it on an album.

Maybe I don't think it's the best song I ever did, but if I'm working on something and I decide I don't like it, then I don't finish it. I never record anything and then decide I don't like it.

Do you write the melody first, or the lyrics?

The music. I find lyrics more difficult. Sometimes I write a snatch of the lyric with the melody but usually I have to finish the words later.

Going back to your live album, what prompted that? I'd always looked on you as a studio artist.

Well, I think everybody, if they have a long career, should make a live album somewhere along the line. It should be part of their work somehow. Also, I had a lot of trouble with my hand two years ago, with the first finger on my left hand, and I couldn't play the guitar.

I couldn't bend the finger and nobody could figure out what was wrong with it, so I wasn't writing anything. I had nothing that I was about to do, so the live LP kept up a sense of continuity.

I got the impression you were taking a chance, pitting your voice against such strong voices as the Jesse Dixon group.

I enjoy singing with them, but I didn't feel that album was taking a chance. I recorded about five shows but virtually the whole album came from one or two of those.

Ever since I put that out, people keep yelling, "Say a few words" to me, like they did on the record. I do say something sometimes, you know.

Since your split with Garfunkel, you've brought many different musical ideas into your records; the South American music, gospel music, reggae and even Dixieland jazz. Where did all these ideas come from?

The South American music came from Los Incas, the group whom I met in May, 1965 when I was living in England. I went to play a couple of dates in Paris and they were on the bill. They gave me their record and on that album was "El Condor Pasa". Then I got involved with them and produced their last album.

The reggae stuff came from when I went to Jamaica in 1969. It wasn't called reggae then, it

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was at its rock steady stage. I bought an album called *Rock Steady '69* and heard Desmond Dekker doing "The Israelites" and "It Mek" and "007".

And when I was in England I used to like ska. Millie Small and her "Lollipop" song and another record called... *er*... "Yesterday Man" (singing). It went *"I'm her yesterday man"*... and another one, too, by a group that had words about *"the music's going around my head"*.

So I knew a little secondhand stuff before I went there. When I did go there, I went into a record store and bought a pile of records and heard a record Jimmy Cliff made called "Vietnam" and I called up the guy who produced it and told him I'd like to record with the same musicians on "Mother And Child Reunion".

I went to Dynamic Sound to make it, where The Rolling Stones and lots of people made records at some time. I got into the gospel quartets a long time ago, with Swans, The Silvertones, then The Dixie Hummingbirds and then Jesse Dixon. I used to like Sam Cooke, too, with The Soul Stirrers.

Then I went to Newport Jazz Festival one year and saw The Jesse Dixon Singers, although I'd actually gone along to see The Dixie Hummingbirds. Eventually I recorded "Loves Me Like A Rock" with The Hummingbirds and, because they were great performers, I asked The Jesse Dixon Singers to come on the road with me.

I don't consciously go out and look for these things – they just happen. I included the Dixieland Jazz just because the song was about the Mardi Gras and New Orleans. Those guys were the real thing, too. They came up from New Orleans, The Onward Brass Band, and they were all about 70-years-old and we got together in Mississippi to record. On my first solo album I did something with Stephane Grappelli, too.

I like to play with lots of different musicians that are outside the sphere of rock'n'roll. I'm really curious about their music and I always find the experience to be socially enjoyable, too. They always turn out to be nice people and there's a lot to be learned from it.

Much to my surprise, I've found that all these people were very pleased to play with me. A lot of them are people who are hardly ever heard apart from in their circles. The Jesse Dixon Singers were very happy to be heard by a larger audience.

I remember when I went down to Jamaica to record I asked the guys there how much I had to pay them and they said they got 10 dollars a song. Going at the pace I go at (laughing) was liable to be very frustrating to those guys who were into cutting six songs a day. And here's me, and I don't care if it takes three days to get the song done.

I couldn't understand why they were getting so nervous, so then I renegotiated the deal and paid them 50 dollars a day or something. The Reverend Claude Jefer sings on "Take Me To The Mardi Gras" and I really respect him a lot, but he wouldn't sing on my record if he didn't like it because he's a very religious man. I had to sing him the song and he made sure there was nothing in the lyric that would be offensive to him.

Actually, had it not been for him I would never have written "Bridge Over Troubled Water" so I was looking to do the guy a favour, to repay him in terms of money, which I did do anyway.

Do you have these relatively obscure musicians in mind when you write certain songs?

I had The Dixie Hummingbirds in mind when I wrote "Love Me Like A Rock". I didn't have the Reverend in mind when I wrote "...Mardi Gras" but instead of me singing falsetto I figured I'd get the best falsetto singer in the world in that style to do it if he would.

And I already knew him through "Bridge Over Troubled Water".

> **"I'd like to sing a song with Artie now and then but not to rejoin permanently"**
>
> ***Paul Simon***

What was that tie-up between you and him on "Bridge..."?

He recorded a song called "Oh Mary Don't You Weep" and somewhere in the middle of the song he scat sings lines that say *"I'll be your bridge over deep water if you trust in my name"*. You've got to be listening real hard to hear it, but it's there.

I was working on this tune which turned out to be "Bridge..." at the time I heard that, and there were no lyrics. Actually I'd called it "Hymn" and really that's where I got the title from. So I feel I owed him a favour but I've paid him back pretty good now.

Have you ever stopped to think why that album did so well?

It is a freak sale, yes. It's hard to know why. Perhaps it was a combination of timing and *er*... well, I'll say this: the song "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was very powerful, but I think "El Condor Pasa" helped a lot. It was very European.

Over the nine or 10 million sales the record has accumulated over the years, it's about 50-50 between the United States and the rest of the world which is an unusual proportion for most popular records.

Mostly the sales are in the US, usually about 80-20, with 80 in the United States and 20 per cent in the rest of the world. Maybe even higher.

So that record sold extraordinarily well throughout Europe and everywhere else. There was something, evidently, that was international about it.

We had no idea it would be successful. At the time we didn't even know whether to release "Bridge..." as a single.

It was Clive Davis who suggested we put it out as a single. Art and I thought it might be too long, because it was over five minutes, and it wouldn't get played on the radio.

There was a good balance on the record and, generally, I think it was a happy record. But it's still hard to explain why it was such a phenomenal hit. Evidently it was very accessible to a lot of people.

As a result of that success, have you had any pressure from Columbia to re-record with Garfunkel and make a new S&G album?

No, I never did. I think, at the time of the split, they were upset but recently there has never been any serious mention of us going back together again and there's certainly never been any pressure.

That doesn't mean that they wouldn't be very happy if we got back together again, I guess.

I don't know – I don't think that you can ever bring something back together again. I don't think you could bring back Simon & Garfunkel and automatically go back to where it was.

I don't think if The Beatles go back together again it would be what it was.

So the chances of a reunion are slim?

Well, I would like to be able to do what we did just recently, which is to sing together from time to time if the song is right and the circumstances are right. I would be pleased if we were free to sing together occasionally but I don't know if that will happen because I don't know whether Artie will stay with Columbia Records when his contract runs up. If he doesn't, then it will present a problem, not an insurmountable one, but a problem.

Ideally I'd like to sing a song with Artie now and then but not to rejoin as a permanent partnership. Because I'd like to be able to sing a song with Phoebe Snow and I'd like to be able to sing a song with The Dixie Hummingbirds or Jesse Dixon.

Would you like to perform live with Garfunkel again?

Again it's possible we could do it occasionally, in fact, we already have done for a TV show here. We did three numbers together and that's going to be shown in England on a TV special when I go there.

We're certainly not going to get back to doing an act together. We couldn't possibly do an act because it stopped in 1970 and, except for "My Little Town", everything we sing together is old.

Nobody is talking about that, thinking about that or planning to do that. If it could come about easily and be fun to do, then I'd think the same as making a record, which is... great, let's do it.

Do you miss Garfunkel's voice as a vehicle to sing your song?
Right... it was a good blend. I like to sing with Artie and I enjoy the blend. I wouldn't say I miss him but I remember that I like it, especially when I'm singing with him again.

Since the split, you've been the more active of the pair. Did you always lead the way?
Well... I've sort of kept at the same pace as I've always done, which is an album every 18 months to two years. That's about how long it takes me to produce enough songs for new album. Artie didn't do very much for a long time after S&G broke up. Only in the last two years did he get back into the studio.

WHICH songs do you still like to sing from the S&G period?
Well, I do "Mrs Robinson", "America", "Homeward Bound", "The Boxer", "The Sound Of Silence" and "Bridge Over Troubled Water". I like those songs. I don't do the songs that Artie sung, "For Emily" and those things. I don't particularly like them.

This summer you showed up in Central Park and played at free concert celebrating the end of the Vietnam War. I thought that was uncharacteristic of you...
It is, but I don't mind going up and singing with anybody. I just sang with Willie Nelson in Texas at a country & western concert. But I don't do that too much. Central Park is right in front of my door and the others who were playing at that concert I've known a long time, Peter Yarrow and Joan Baez. Phil Ochs asked me to come along and it was a nice sunny day, so I did.

You looked little unhappy about it all.
I was unhappy. I was unhappy because I was very nervous with my son. A lot of people were taking pictures and I didn't want a lot of people to take pictures of my son. People were filming what I was doing and I didn't want to be filmed.

I just wanted to go up and sing a couple of songs and then stop. Actually I wanted to hang out there a bit, but it turned out that people were hanging around me so much that I had to go home.

People recognise me a lot but they don't annoy me. People are usually really nice to me.

Are you nervous on stage or before you go on? No, never, I don't feel any nerves at all.

Next month you're going back to London. Do you still feel an affinity for London because you lived there?
Yes I do. And I wanted to play outside London this time. I also wanted to play Scotland, but I couldn't work it out. I like the Albert Hall, but I couldn't get it this time so I have to play the Palladium.

> **"It wasn't *Bridge Over Troubled Water* that precipitated the break-up, but the movies Artie was doing"**
> ***Paul Simon***

Will you be taking the same show to England that is currently touring the US?
Yes. I don't change much from night to night and everyone is going to Europe with me. The order of songs changed a bit during the first six shows, but now we've got it right and it's staying the same.

Had *Bridge*... not been as successful as it was would you still have split with Garfunkel?
Yes, I think all partnerships break up. It's an inevitable by-product of growth.

Really we have quite different tastes, Artie and I. You can tell because his albums, that he does by himself, are very different from my albums. We would have come into conflict over that anyway.

In any case, it wasn't *Bridge Over Troubled Water* that precipitated the break-up, but the movies that Artie was doing. His time was taken up with them. It's possible we could have broken up later, but it would have happened anyway.

You didn't feel, then, that you'd achieved some kind of goal with *Bridge*... and couldn't ever top it?
No, because we broke up when that album was finished, not when it was released. We said that's that before it was out, so we had no idea it was going to be that big then. It was lucky that it was that big a hit, because it's nice to go out with a hit.

Does that finger still give you trouble?
It's all right now, but whenever it gets bad I have to get shots into it. I had calcium deposits on the joint which you get through playing the guitar.

I play as little as I can now. Eventually I'll lose the use of this finger, but hopefully that'll be 40 years from now. I haven't had to have a shot in six months now.

Was it because of your finger that your brother Eddie began playing on stage with you?
Right. He played for me in Japan one time when I couldn't play myself. He teaches guitar here in New York. I don't think he wants to be part of my entourage. I think it's strain enough for him being my brother, because he looks a lot like me. He just did that as a favour to me but he doesn't want to be a professional musician in that capacity.

Will your next project be another album, or have you any different plans?
I don't think I'm going to start work on another album. I'm going to do something else, a show of some kind. Rather than write 10 songs and sing them, I'd like to try and write my songs for something. Broadway is interesting, or off-Broadway in some musical format. A show in a theatre sounds interesting. I think I'll try that. There've been lots of offers but I don't think it's the kind of thing someone will offer me. It's something I'm going to have to do myself.

Will this be next summer then?
Later than that. I won't finish this tour until next year and then I'll take three months off and read and relax.

Where do you go to relax?
To my living room.

You don't go off to India or somewhere exotic like some successful musicians?
No, I don't like to travel. I prefer it in midtown New York. My country's here... here in midtown. ●

On stage with brother Eddie at Osaka-jyo Hall, Japan, April 1, 1974

KOHHASEBE/SHINKOMUSIC/GETTYIMAGES

Live at the War Is Over rally in Central Park, New York, May 1975

LEIF SKOOGFORS/CORBIS/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

RELEASED: 12 AUGUST | **1980**

One Trick Pony

"Morose little art film" spawns a soundtrack mingling fact with fiction. A past-it singer on the skids — does art imitate life? **BY TERRY STAUNTON**

IN a remarkable scene from *One Trick Pony*, the 1980 music-biz potboiler scripted by and starring Paul Simon, his character Jonah Levin, a past-his-prime sensitive troubadour, mops the sweat from his brow at the end of an opening act slot to a largely indifferent audience in a hip, cramped club. The stage he has just vacated is then commandeered by headliners The B-52s, who whip the crowd into a frenzy with "Rock Lobster".

As visual shorthand for the vagaries of public taste, mass appeal or the changing of the guard it's perhaps a little too pat, a little too on-the-nose, but it nonetheless feeds theories to the possible intent behind many of the songs Simon wrote to serve the film's narrative, and which appear on the accompanying album.

The movie wasn't a hit, earning less than $1 million at the box office, a disappointing return on a production budget of $7 million. *Rolling Stone* dismissed it as "a morose little art film", its plot hamstrung by too many Hollywood cliches: a hard-nosed record company mogul (Rip Torn), an egotistical and largely untalented producer (Lou Reed), and the central character's shaky relationships with his estranged wife and young son.

Of more pressing concern, perhaps, to long-standing Simon fans was the music. But did the film's premise provide its star with a built-in excuse for a dip in quality control? Were we to approach these 10 tracks as examples of Jonah's fast-emptying well of inspiration, rather than top-notch additions to the canon of one of America's most celebrated singer-songwriters?

Certainly, it isn't as loved as its predecessors, and was Simon's first post-Garfunkel release to fall short of the Top 10 in both the US and the UK. Yet, if we think of the album as a separate entity, an adjunct to a celebrated body of work, the songs framed as extensions of a fictional character, an aural portrait of an artist approaching middle age plagued by doubt and ground down by an increasingly brutal and uncaring commercial marketplace, it is, in its own way, a resounding success.

To his credit, Simon admitted during promotional interviews for the movie that despite having created the main character he couldn't, in all honesty, identify with him: "Jonah Levin doesn't have the luxury that I have of sitting back and thinking about strengths and weaknesses. He's out there hustling a buck, and I'm not."

One Trick Pony (the film) isn't a musical in the traditional sense of lyrics either propelling or punctuating turning points in the story, but it does intermittently address Jonah's plight in song. The title number's clumsy continuation of the equine metaphor is a curious hybrid of resignation and defiance: "*See how he prances, the way his hooves just seem to glide/He's just a one-trick pony, that's all he is, but he turns that trick with pride.*"

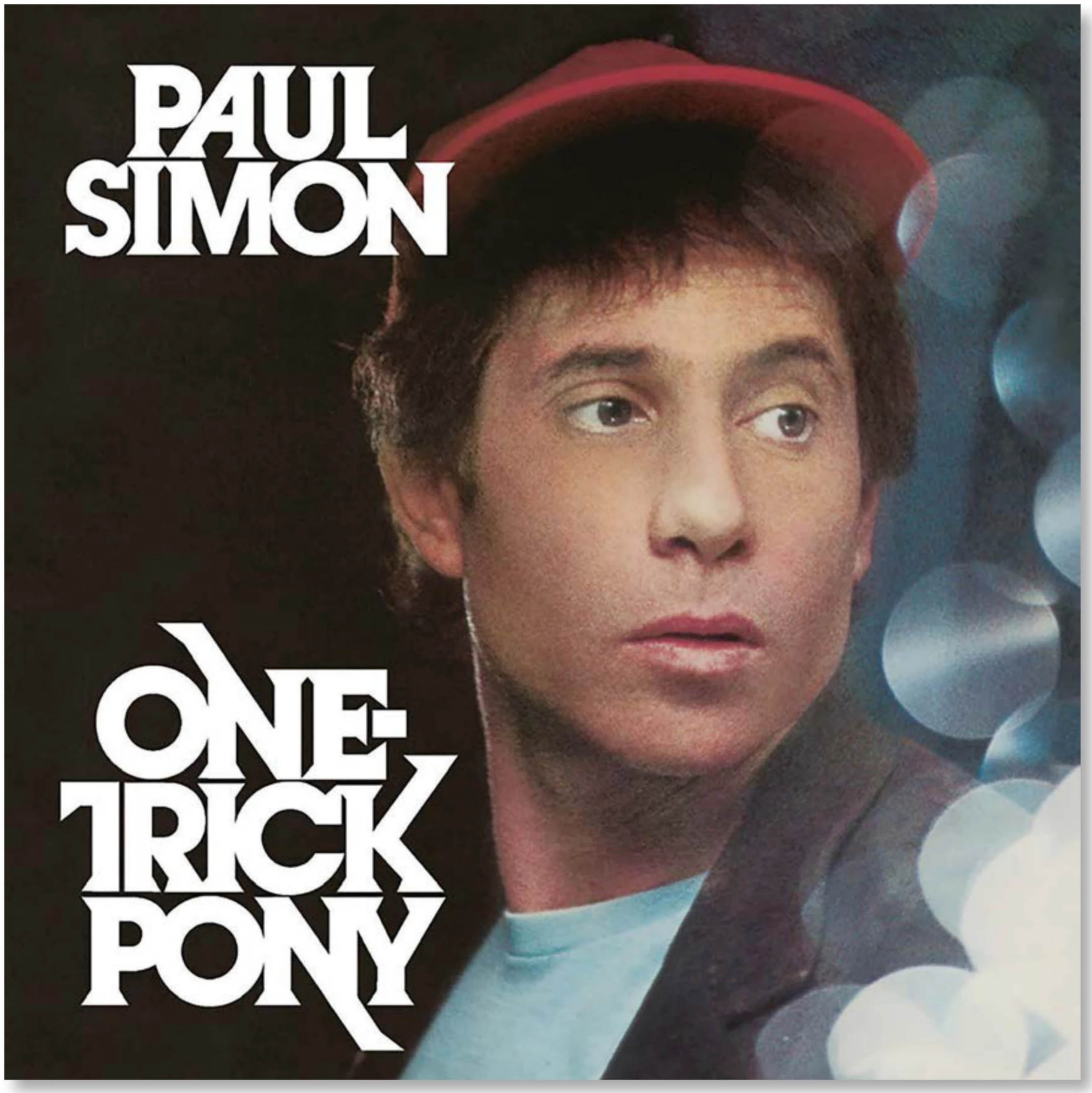
There's a more eloquent flicker of hope in "Jonah", a clarion call to struggling musicians everywhere ("*No-one gives their dreams away too lightly/They hold them tightly, warm against the cold/One more year of travelling round this circuit/Then you can work it into gold*"), but he's godawful and grating on the self-pitying life-on-the-road hokum of "God Bless The Absentee", in which, after bemoaning being far from loved ones, he, or rather Jonah, declares, "*Lord, I am a surgeon, and music is my knife/It cuts away my sorrow and purifies my life.*"

For the most part, though, *One Trick Pony* (the album) is Simon broadly doing what he does best, albeit while planting the thought in listeners' heads that he's done it better in the past. Opening cut and Grammy-nominated first single "Late In The Evening" is a notable exception, its rat-a-tat vocal delivery

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"The astonishing thing about this is that although it comes five years after Paul Simon's last studio work, it sounds as if it could have been recorded on the same day. And where the lack of cinematic context doesn't leave the songs mysterious, it leaves them one-dimensional."
Graham Lock
NME, August 23, 1980

"Simon's third film score marks the return of a major talent after too long away."
Patrick Humphries,
Melody Maker
August 23, 1980



and driving rhythm a close relative to "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover" or 1977's "Stranded In A Limousine", the latter debuted on a greatest-hits collection to fulfil Simon's contract with Columbia before signing a new deal with Warner Brothers (reportedly worth $15 million).

While almost any singer-songwriter might be proud to come up with something as articulately introspective as the album's key ballad "How The Heart Approaches What It Yearns", Simon sounds like he's on autopilot, buffing up a canvas that's already been hanging on his wall for years. It's a similar story with "That's Why God Made The Movies" and its wry observations of both childhood and romantic abandonment.

Neither of the above are bad songs, but they're not world beaters, and in the pre-Spotify age of mixtapes with finite space they would fall by the wayside in favour of past gems that approached similar subject matter with more panache. Ultimately, the album's most fully realised and most affecting moment comes at the close, in a tender lament to Working Joe weariness.

"Long, Long Day" is a beautifully seductive four minutes, again concerning itself with the ups and downs of a jobbing musician like Jonah Levin, but a lot less forced than other tracks on the album that map out a similar route. Whereas "God Bless The Absentee" and the title track falter outside of the framework of the movie narrative, here the song thrives in isolation.

Closer in spirit and atmosphere to what was Simon's first paean to how he earned a living, 1965's "Homeward Bound", it's considerably more grandiose, thanks to Bob Friedman's heart-tugging string arrangement and an understated accompaniment by jazz guitarist Joe Beck, whose CV also includes stints with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Miles Davis.

> The album's most fully realised and affecting moment comes at the close

Arguably, an illustration of its emotional clout came when Simon was the guest on a 1980 edition of *The Muppet Show*; after jovially adapting "Scarborough Fair", "El Condor Pasa" and "Loves Me Like A Rock" as jumping-off points for maniacal comic skits with furry co-stars, "Long, Long Day" is performed straight, wistfully cradling an acoustic guitar in his dressing room – with no chance of being upstaged by The B-52s.

It ensures *One Trick Pony* ends on a high and just about makes the album's shortcomings forgivable; shortcomings that suggest not every stop is neatly planned for a poet and a one-man band. ●

SLEEVENOTES | One Trick Pony

1. Late In The Evening ★★★★
2. That's Why God Made The Movies ★★★
3. One Trick Pony ★★★
4. How The Heart Approaches What It Yearns ★★★★
5. Oh, Marion ★★★
6. Ace In The Hole ★★★
7. Nobody ★★★★
8. Jonah ★★★
9. God Bless The Absentee ★★★
10. Long, Long Day ★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Producer: Paul Simon, Phil Ramone.
Recorded at: A&R Recording, New York; Agora Ballroom, Cleveland, Ohio
Personnel: Paul Simon (vocals, guitar, percussion, horn and string arrangements), John Tropea, Joe Beck, Eric Gale, Irwin Markowitz, Hughe McCracken, Jeff Mironov (gtr), Hiram Bullock (slide gtr), Tony Levin, Anthony Jackson (bass), Richard Tee (keys). Don Grolnick (synth), Steve Gadd (drums), Michael Brecker (saxes), Jon Faddis (flugelhorn), Patti Austin (vocals)
Highest chart position: UK 17; US 12

Simon & Garfunkel —
The Concert In Central Park
RELEASED: 16 FEBRUARY | **1982**

Simon & Garfunkel —
Old Friends: Live On Stage
RELEASED: 07 DECEMBER | **2004**

The Live Reunions

Old Friends; new challenges. Paul and Art reform first for the good of Central Park, and in so doing reignite a once-a-decade double act.

BY PETER WATTS

If you ever want to hear the sound of half a million people holding their breath, take a listen to Simon & Garfunkel's first, belated live album **The Concert In Central Park** WARNER BROS, 1982 ★★★★. The moment comes midway through a spellbinding rendition of "April Come She Will", as Garfunkel's angelic voice meets Simon's rippling guitar and time seems to stop, audience and musicians collectively hoping an instant of transcendent sublimity will never end. Miraculously, it happens again during "Bridge Over Troubled Water" another near-perfect union of voice, melody and location in a single moment in time. More than 10 years after it was written, a remarkable song has rarely sounded better.

The occasion was a free benefit concert in September 1981 for Central Park, which was $3 million in the hole and needed some kind of miracle to get it back in shape. Enter Simon & Garfunkel, two New Yorkers who had frequently made the city's landscape central to their music and now came together to save its lungs. It had been a while, but it wasn't actually too difficult to get them back together. The pair loved the park, had occasionally reconvened since their 1970 split and, most importantly, were both experiencing slight dips in their solo careers. There were just a couple of issues to iron out, the biggest of which was about personnel: Garfunkel wanted to keep it tight like the old days, with only the two of them on stage; Simon worried the sound would be too small for the size and scale of the venue. He won, and ultimately 12 musicians took part.

CRITICS' VERDICTS

SIMON AND GARFUNKEL THE CONCERT IN CENTRAL PARK

"Well, it's either a nostalgia-based indication of a rekindled American protest spirit, or it's half a million guilty and/or guileless Americans saying thanks for the memory. It's all we'll ever need. You know the songs, you don't need the record, and you can stir in whatever cynicism you feel appropriate."
Dave Hill, NME, April 19, 1982

These included some formidable jazz and soul performers, among them pianist Richard Tee, drummer Steve Gadd and bassist Anthony Jackson.

Bar the occasional solo, the band's presence is generally fairly subtle. They provide a solid foundation for a greatest hits set-list that featured 21 tracks – 10 Simon & Garfunkel hits; eight Simon solo numbers; a lonely one by Art and slight but spritely covers of "Wake Up Little Susie" and "Maybellene". Tracks with a New York theme or setting have a little added frisson, such as the reference to the Statue Of Liberty on "American Tune", "The 59th Street Bridge Song", "The Boxer" or Garfunkel's "A Heart In New York". Even a mention of the New Jersey turnpike on "America" gets a whoop from an audience eager to be pleased. It's fun to hear what Garfunkel brings to Simon's solo numbers, while several arrangements are adapted and expanded for the bigger setting, with a number of songs – notably "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover", "Late In The Evening" and "Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard" – given a salsa/Latin backwash.

It's all rather lovely, even if things get a bit slow mid-set. The harmonies are fresh – the first moment they hit, on "Homeward Bound", is a special moment indeed – and the goodwill immense. Apparently, both Simon and Garfunkel felt they underperformed, but there's a lack of anxiety in the music that gives the music a relaxed and natural feel despite the fractious history of the two protagonists. The

concert film was sold to HBO for $1 million and the album went double platinum. Only $50,000 was raised for Central Park but the publicity was priceless.

Many hoped the concert would lead to a full-scale reunion. A successful world tour followed – Europe and Japan in 1982; Australia, US and Israel in 1983. Warner Bros wanted a studio album – indeed, one was almost completed – but the recording process drove the pair even further apart. They came together again briefly in 1990 when they were inducted in the Rock'n'Roll Hall Of Fame and Garfunkel joined Simon for part of the latter's month-long residency at the Paramount Theatre in 1993 – bootlegs are available. In between these dates, Simon played another concert at Central Park. Garfunkel was conspicuously not invited.

A HAPPIER reunion came in 2003, with the semi-ironically named Old Friends tour – "We met when we were 11, we started to sing when we were 13, and we started to argue when we were 14," Simon told the audience on the opening night of a 40-date tour. **Old Friends: Live On Stage** WARNER BROS, 2004 ★★★ came from this tour, capturing them back in New York at Madison Square Garden and finally prepared to embrace 1960s nostalgia. Before the show, a video played newsreel from the decade interspersed with footage of Simon & Garfunkel as young men like something from *The Wonder Years*.

> Their ageing voices give the words and music renewed depth

By now, neither singer could sing like they used to, and some songs are performed in different keys to reflect this. In some cases – opening number "Old Friends" is the most obvious – their ageing voices give the words and music renewed depth but generally speaking it required the (excellent) band to step up and fill the space, allowing the duo to pace themselves. Although that's understandable, it does slightly detract from the core appeal. The double album included "Citizen Of The Planet", a track originally written for the proposed 1983 reunion LP, and has a guest appearance from another pair of combative harmonisers, the Everly Brothers, who deliver a fine "Bye Bye Love". It's a very even, slick affair with "The Boxer" offering a particularly elegant highlight. Further dates followed, but their final public performance as a duo came at the New Orleans Jazz Festival in 2010 when Garfunkel was suffering throat problems. For those who'd rather remember happier times, there will also be *The Concert In Central Park*. ●

SLEEVENOTES | The Concert In Central Park/ Old Friends: Live On Stage

1. Mrs Robinson ★★★
2. Homeward Bound ★★★★
3. America ★★★★
4. Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard ★★★★
5. Scarborough Fair ★★★★★
6. April Come She Will ★★★★★
7. Wake Up Little Susie ★★★
8. Still Crazy After All These Years ★★★
9. American Tune ★★★★
10. Late In The Evening ★★★
11. Slip Slidin' Away ★★★
12. A Heart In New York ★★★
13. Kodachrome/Maybellene ★★★
14. Bridge Over Troubled Water ★★★★★
15. 50 Ways To Leave Your Lover ★★★★
16. The Boxer ★★★★
17. Old Friends ★★★★★
18. The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feeling' Groovy) ★★★★
19. The Sound Of Silence ★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Recorded at: Central Park, New York
Produced by: Paul Simon, Art Garfunkel, Roy Halee, Phil Ramone
Personnel: Paul Simon (vocals, guitars), Art Garfunkel (vocals), Pete Carr (guitar), Dave Brown (guitar), Anthony Jackson (bass), Richard Tee (keyboards), Steve Gadd (drums), Grady Tate (drums), Rob Mounsey (synth), John Gatchell (trumpet), John Eckert (trumpet), Dave Tofani (sax), Gerry Niewood (sax)
Highest chart position: UK 6; US 1

1. Old Friends/Bookends ★★★★★
2. A Hazy Shade Of Winter ★★★★
3. I Am A Rock ★★★★
4. America ★★★
5. At The Zoo ★★★★
6. Baby Driver ★★★
7. Kathy's Song ★★★
8. Hey Schoolgirl ★★★
9. Bye Bye Love ★★★
10. Scarborough Fair/ Canticle ★★★★
11. Homeward Bound ★★★
12. The Sound Of Silence ★★★
13. Slip Slidin' Away ★★★
14. El Condor Pasa (If I Could) ★★★★
15. The Only Living Boy In New York ★★★★★
16. American Tune ★★★
17. My Little Town ★★★
18. Bridge Over Troubled Water ★★★★★
19. The Boxer ★★★★★
20. Leaves That Are Green ★★★
21. Citizen Of The Planet ★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Recorded at Madison Square Garden, New York
Produced by: Jeff Kramer, John Scher, Eddie Simon
Released December 2004
Personnel: Paul Simon (guitar, vocals), Art Garfunkel (vocals), Warren Bernhardt (piano), Jamey Haddad (percussion), Jim Keltner (drums), Pino Palladino (bass), Larry Saltzman (guitar), Rob Schwimmer (keyboards, theramin), Mark Stewart (guitar, cello), Don Everly (guitars, vocals), Phil Everly (guitar, vocals)
Highest chart position: UK – ; US –

RELEASED: 04 NOVEMBER | **1983**

Hearts And Bones

Paul'n'Art shatter once more; what remains is "a bad record of good songs" straight from the psychiatrist's couch. BY NICK HASTED

THE Concert In Central Park's sleeve shows Paul Simon's face aglow with optimism, his old friend Artie supernal and satisfied in his rightful place beside him. More than two years after the historic gig that that best-selling record celebrated, the remnants of what was intended to be the first studio Simon & Garfunkel album since *Bridge Over Troubled Water* appeared bearing only Simon's defiantly huge name, and a blurred video surveillance image of the singer, looking harried and grim. The ugly appearance of the album now called *Hearts And Bones* matched the mood of dismayed fans. During the lengthy wait since the concert's giddy triumph, something had clearly gone very wrong.

In truth *Hearts And Bones* continued a low point in Simon's solo career, and a tumultuous one in his life, which Garfunkel merely complicated. 1980's *One Trick Pony* project had begun his lucrative Warner contract with his most humiliating failure, followed by uniquely stubborn writer's block that lingered into 1981. When Simon confided his suspicion that his work was worthless to psychiatrist Roderic Gorney, Gorney offered a guitar to write his issues out.

"Allergies" kicked what became *Hearts And Bones* into gear by parodying his creative despair: "*Maladies/Melodies/...My hand can't touch a guitar string/My fingers just burn and ache.*" With his new girlfriend Carrie Fisher also roaring through his ordered life wired on coke, and proving as opposite yet addictive as Artie, his new songs felt personal in a "gut-wrenching" way.

Sessions for the album (initially called 'Think Too Much') had begun shortly before the Central Park concert. It was half-finished when the global impact of Simon & Garfunkel's return to action, which had delighted them both, led to an intermittent world tour starting on May 7, 1982. An initial, blissfully easy Garfunkel guest vocal on the album was soon expanded into the pair's official studio comeback. But the particular sort of uptight camaraderie that had made their return so electric in Central Park couldn't survive new work's riskier intimacy. "The truth is," Simon told journalist Robert Hilburn, "I had a very hard time emotionally turning it over to... a Simon & Garfunkel album."

Simon froze Garfunkel out of his old co-producer's role. Garfunkel responded by writing his own harmonies. Having initiated their split in 1970, his frosty moods and prevarication now tested a reunion he needed to the point of destruction again. With Simon's vocals long in the bag and the release scheduled to coincide with July 1983's US stadium tour looming, Garfunkel decided to walk across America, airily declaring that he would finish his arrangements en route. He did just that, gorgeously. But all Simon saw was moustaches on his perfect Mona Lisas: insufferable affronts to a decade of control. In August, he rang Garfunkel to say his vocals had been wiped, and, by the way, he was marrying Carrie Fisher: please come. Incredibly, Garfunkel did.

'Think Too Much' haunts *Hearts And Bones* as "Get Back" does *Let It Be*, in every Simon self-harmony and too high bridge. The song that had begun the album in a psychiatrist's office, "Allergies", was made its first single, although its "gut-wrenching sentences" were now buried in a knotty, disjointed arrangement. The Nile Rodgers-assisted calypso funk of "Cars Are Cars", like the single "Think Too Much (a)" (which went full Chic with Bernard Edwards too), did little for Simon either, in the year of Bowie and Rodgers' *Let's Dance*. Engineer Dan Nash thought much of this covered for Garfunkel's absence. "He had to come up with musical accoutrements to make it fly," he told Analog Planet. "So there were a lot of extra musical parts

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Nostalgia is very vulgar. It says nothing about the past, and everything about your desire to escape from the present. Paul Simon is not a boring set text for CSE English but a brilliant songwriter who happens to have fallen on hard times."
Amanda Root, NME, November 12, 1983

added... that weren't organic." Simon would later bitterly single out *Hearts And Bones* as a bad record of good songs.

Music that Simon retrospectively claimed was "too much about my life – about Carrie" to share anyway found ethereal, acoustic beauty away from its modish moments. "Hearts And Bones" is a memoir of his combustible marriage with Fisher, "*one and one-half wandering Jews*" in the "*arc of a love affair*". Simon's finger-picking cradles a voice stretching languidly over the end of lines. "Song About the Moon" is chain-gang gospel blues about songwriting, its melody a lovely amble, begging for Sam Cooke, or the Garfunkel who had originally sung the bridge Simon strains for.

"Train In The Distance" pays tribute to first wife Peggy Harper, and the "*negotiations and love songs*" of their marriage's honourable, fond failure. "Rene And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War" is a similarly gauzy, delicate song about a famous married couple making love in New York to the sound of doo-wop, those old bands providing comfort in verses that hang suspended in time.

"The Late Great Johnny Ace" is an updated "American Pie", beginning with the death of the titular singer in 1954, then JFK's, then Lennon's. "I had the title [*and melody*] for a long time," Simon told journalist Paul Zollo, "because I was going to write a song about Johnny Ace's death and John Kennedy's death... the third John's death by gunfire... brought all those songs together." Simon heading to a bar with the stranger who tells him of Lennon's death was an invented intimacy from a man not given to them. A minute's orchestral coda by Philip Glass then hauntingly completes *Hearts And Bones*. The ominous, dreamy synths that introduce the song chilled the mood at Central Park too, when Simon debuted it months after Lennon's death. It was shockingly interrupted by a crazed fan lunging at him just as he sang the Lennon verse; he dodged away with startled speed, the song's point made in the rawest way.

> With Simon's vocals long in the bag... Garfunkel decided to walk across America

When *Hearts And Bones* confirmed Garfunkel's removal on its release, fans duly shot the messenger, making it Simon's worst-seller. In discovering how little he could now share with Garfunkel, Simon had further sidelined himself. He remained sanguine, determined to pursue the album's new use of "enriched language" within the narratives he was known for ("*Gravity leaps like a knife off the pavement... Wash your hands in dreams and lightning*"). And he would fix his musical mistakes, concentrating on his sound above all else next time. *Hearts And Bones* began *Graceland*'s triumph. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Hearts And Bones

1. Allergies ★★
2. Hearts And Bones ★★★★
3. When Numbers Get Serious ★★
4. Think Too Much (b) ★★★
5. Song About The Moon ★★★★
6. Think Too Much (a) ★★★
7. Train In The Distance ★★★★
8. Rene And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War ★★★★
9. Cars Are Cars ★★
10. The Late Great Johnny Ace ★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced by: Paul Simon, Russ Titelman, Roy Halee, Lenny Waronker
Recorded at: Warner Bros Studios, N Hollywood; Regent Sound Studios, Power Station, Mediasound, Atlantic Studios, Sigma, New York
Personnel: Paul Simon (vocals, acoustic guitar, drum programming), Dean Parks (elec gtr, hi-string gtr), Al Di Meola, Eric Gale, Sid McGinnis (elec gtr), Nile Rodgers (elec gtr, drum prog), Anthony Jackson (contrabass gtr), Marcus Miller (bass), Steve Gadd, Steve Ferrone, Jeff Porcaro (drums)
Highest chart position: UK 34; US 35

RELEASED: 25 AUGUST | **1986**

Graceland

Breaking the boycott to give black South Africa a global voice, Simon made the sound of the townships a Western sensation. BY NIGEL WILLIAMSON

A quarter of a century after apartheid was consigned to the sewers of history, it's difficult to comprehend why *Graceland* was so divisively controversial that Paul Simon was forced to employ a crisis management firm to salvage his career and save his liberal reputation.

His motives in recording an album with black South African township musicians were hardly dishonourable, nor was the outcome. He put some much-needed cash in their pockets, raised their profile and persuaded a white pop audience to fall head-over-heels in love with the indestructible beat of Soweto.

At this distance, most would argue that by introducing black South African music to the world, Simon was advancing the anti-apartheid cause. Yet back in 1986, that was hardly the point and his intentions barely mattered. He had busted the UN's sanctions and the release of *Graceland* brought down a heap of ordure on his head. Billy Bragg, Paul Weller and Jerry Dammers picketed his concerts and he was placed on a UN blacklist.

Simon put up an emotional defence, but he knew full well what he was getting into. Before flying to Johannesburg he had consulted Harry Belafonte, who advised him to seek the approval of the ANC. Simon ignored him: nobody had the right to vet who he was allowed to record with. "It's like having your dad tell you not to take the car on a date you really want to go on," he said later. The fatuousness of the analogy illustrated that however noble his intentions, he was guilty at the very least of a naïveté flecked with arrogance.

Yet although the UN blacklisting and the anti-apartheid pickets threatened to destroy his career, ultimately the record-buying public sided with Simon. His previous album *Hearts And Bones* had flopped, failing to make the Top 30 on either side of the Atlantic. By his own admission his career was in a "tailspin". Both Neil Young and Bob Dylan had hit a mid-1980s buffer and perhaps he was about to join them in limbo. Instead, *Graceland* became the most successful album of his solo career, selling an estimated 16 million copies worldwide, winning a Grammy as Album Of The Year and spearheading a world music boom that reverberates to this day.

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Simon has always been blessed with remarkably hummable melodies, but since the heyday of his association with Garfunkel, the instrospective nature of his work has often seemed an anachronism. What a delightful surprise then is this lovely soundscape and how modern-sounding its passage. Simon has taken the contemporary mbaqnga dance music of the SA townships and fused it with his own peculiarly New Yorkian preoccupations and incidently regenerated his own muse in the process."
Penny Reel, NME, September 13, 1986

The roots of Simon's creative renaissance – and his political troubles – lay in a homemade cassette tape given to him by Heidi Berg from the *Saturday Night Live* house band, whose solo album he was producing. The tape had only a hand-scrawled label reading "Accordion Jive Vol II" but when Simon played it in his car he was bewitched. "It was summer music, happy music. It sounded like early black, urban, mid-'50s rock'n'roll to me," he remembered. After playing the tape for a month, he found he was making up melodies, "just singing along with the tape, the way people do".

The tape was a collection of *mbaqanga*, the name given to the jiving street pop of Soweto and South Africa's black townships but none of the songs were named or credited. With the help of Warner's boss Lenny Waronker – who contacted the white South African producer Hilton Rosenthal – Simon discovered his favourite instrumental track was titled "Gumboots" by the Boyoyo Boys. He wanted to buy the rights and put his own melody and lyrics over the top, as he had done with an Andean folk song for Simon and Garfunkel's "El Cóndor Pasa". Instead Rosenthal suggested an entire album of South African music and by February 1985 Simon was on a plane to Johannesburg, where he spent two weeks recording with the Boyoyo Boys and other local musicians.

Simon arrived with nothing pre-written, but in addition to a stirring improvisation around "Gumboots", during the jam sessions the band Tau Ea Matsekha provided Simon with the beat for "The Boy In the Bubble", the guitarist Ray Phiri gave him the riffs for "You Can Call Me Al" and "Graceland", and General MD Shirinda & The Gaza Sisters provided the backing to what became "I Know What I Know".

He returned to New York with the backing tracks for eight potential songs to which he added lyrics and melodies. Needing more, he then flew a bunch of South African musicians to New York and from these sessions came LP highlights "Diamonds On The Souls Of Her Shoes" and "Homeless", featuring the voices of the a cappella Zulu choir Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Seeking to make kindred connections with indigenous forms of American music, the South African accordions led him to add the zydeco sounds of Louisiana's Rockin' Dopsie to "That Was

Your Mother" and the Tex-Mex stylings of Los Lobos to "All Around The World Or The Myth Of Fingerprints".

When Simon came to add lyrics to the bouncing grooves of his backing tracks, he considered writing about apartheid but concluded politics wasn't his subject. Far better, he decided, to stick to what he knew best and juxtapose first world urbanity and neurosis against his colliding soundscapes of American pop and third world exuberance.

THE album's opening song, "The Boy In The Bubble" dissects the modern world's *"days of miracle and wonder"*, from technological progress to terrorism. "You Can Call Me Al" traces his trip to South Africa, starting in dislocation (*"Doesn't speak the language/He holds no currency/He is a foreign man/He is surrounded by the sound"*) and ending in enlightenment (*"He sees angels in the architecture, spinning in infinity/ He says 'amen' and 'hallelujah'"*)

The title track is filled with the inner drama of Simon's own mid-life crisis and provided the album with its title when he changed a lyric about his African journey *"driving through wasteland"* to an American pilgrimage with his young son *"through the cradle of the Civil War"* to Elvis Presley's Memphis home.

If much of the music is essentially a vibrant dance soundtrack, there are moments of transcendence, too, particularly on the serene duet with Linda Ronstadt on "Under African Skies", "Crazy Love Part Two" with its ethereal soprano sax and the gospel vocal harmonies on the entirely a cappella "Homeless".

> The album was original and inspired — it changed the cultural landscape forever

The result was an album that was unique, original and inspired – and it changed the cultural landscape forever. Despite the political furore, *Graceland* became the benchmark by which all future collaborations between western pop heroes and world musicians had to be judged.

A quarter of a century after the album won a Grammy, Simon performed *Graceland* in its entirely in London's Hyde Park in 2012 with Ladysmith Black Mambazo and other surviving South African musicians from the original sessions. With no pickets and the political brawling long forgotten, the music had never sounded better – no longer controversial but simply a celebration of the rainbow nation, the music that provided a soundtrack of solidarity during the dark days of apartheid and a shared and universal humanity. ●

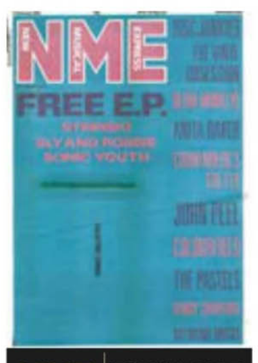
SLEEVENOTES | Graceland

1. The Boy In The Bubble ★★★★★
2. Graceland ★★★★★
3. I Know What I Know ★★★★★
4. Gumboots ★★★★
5. Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes ★★★★★
6. You Can Call Me Al ★★★★★
7. Under African Skies ★★★★
8. Homeless ★★★★★
9. Crazy Love, Vol II ★★★★
10. That Was Your Mother ★★★★
11. All Around The World Or The Myth Of Fingerprints ★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced by: Paul Simon
Recorded at: New York City, London, Los Angeles, Louisiana and South Africa
Personnel include: Paul Simon (vocals, guitar), Joseph Shabalala & Ladysmith Black Mambazo (vocals), Ray Phiri (guitar), Rockin' Dopsie, Los Lobos, Linda Ronstadt (vocals track 7), Boyoyo Boys; Tau Ea Matsekha, General MD Shirinda & The Gaza Sisters, Adrian Bellew (guitar synthesiser)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 3

"Take a listen to this music, world"

PAUL SIMON is dubbed both "genius" and "loathsome coward" for breaking the cultural boycott to record in South Africa and tour the resulting *Graceland* album. Gigs are picketed, proper channels ignored; a political storm ensues. Simon's defence? "Pop music is not a place to argue complex political issues"



NME 7/2/1987

IN THE summer of 1984, Paul Simon is sent a tape of *Gumboots Accordion Jive Vol 2*, which he plays regularly in his car. This influences his decision to make an album inspired by African music. The tape came from South Africa. "I first thought, 'Too bad it's not from Zimbabwe, Zaire or Nigeria, life would have been more simple.'"

Simon then consulted the black musician Quincy Jones, who told him to "respect musicians", and during a period in which he refused invitations to perform at Sun City in South African homeland of Bophuthatswana, he prepared to record in Johannesburg.

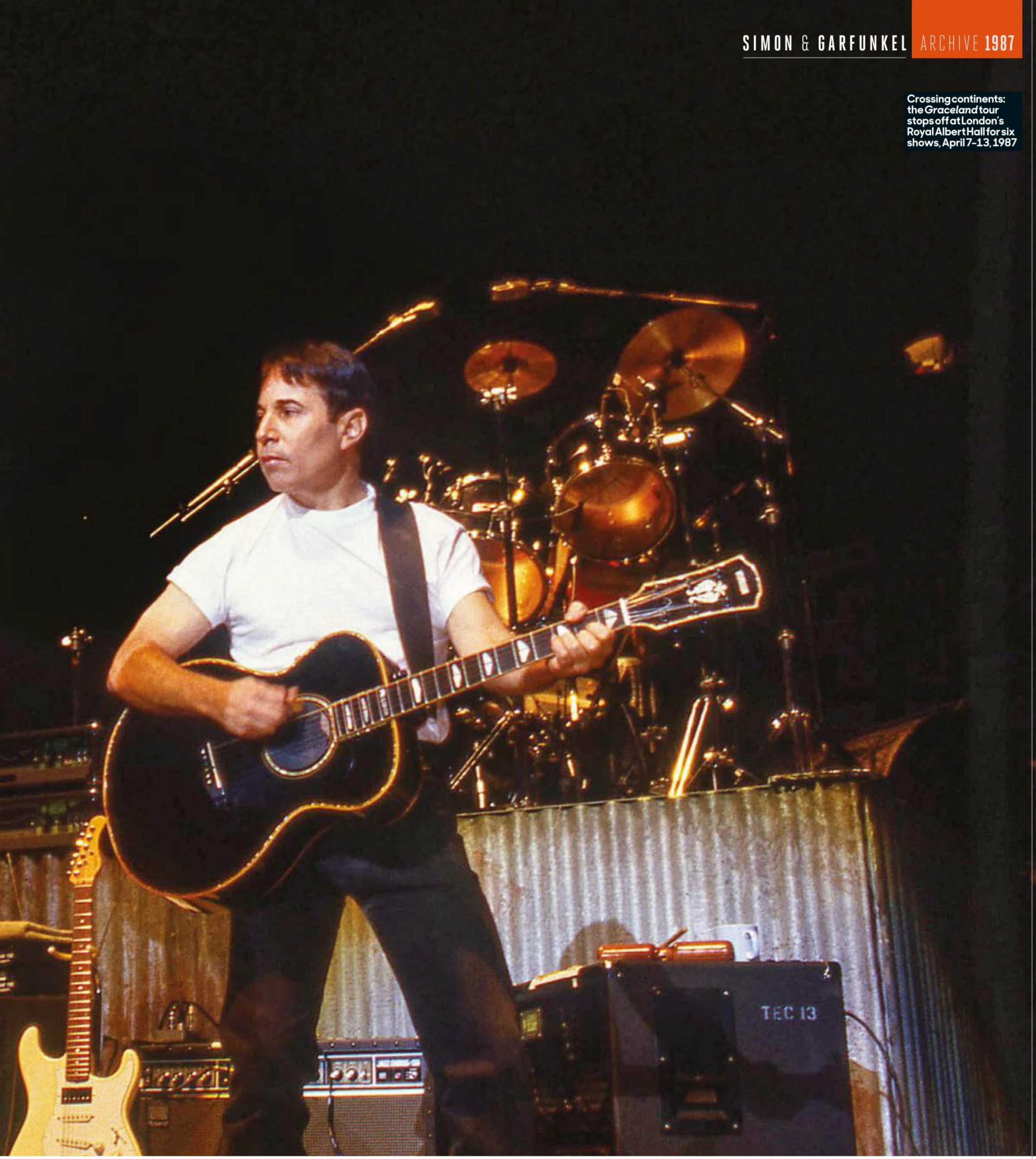
After taking part in "We Are The World" for the Band Aid project, Simon books several weeks of recording time in a South African studio, where he cuts five tracks from his album using South African musicians who are reputedly paid three times the normal union rates. The recording sessions coincide with the second Sharpeville massacre and several musicians are forced to leave the sessions early to abide by South Africa's racist pass laws.

In March 1986 some of the South African musicians are flown to New York to record more tracks and in April the *Graceland* album is completed. On its release in the UK, *Graceland* was criticised for not attacking the apartheid system but was generally well received on a musical level. Simon told New York's *Village Voice*: "I'm not good at writing politics, I'm a relationship writer, relationships and introspection."

The extensive sleevenotes on the back of the album also contain nothing that can be construed as anti-apartheid: fuelling rumours in the music press that Simon had signed an agreement with the government of the Republic of South Africa, preventing him from criticising the Botha regime.

During a month in which the state-authorised radio stations in South Africa are playing tracks from *Graceland*, Simon is interviewed by *SPIN*

ILPOMUSTO/SHUTTERSTOCK



Crossing continents: the *Graceland* tour stops off at London's Royal Albert Hall for six shows, April 7–13, 1987

magazine apparently after checking the credentials of the magazine's writer. He tells *SPIN*: "I thought it was in the guidelines of the cultural boycott, although technically I wasn't."

After announcing a European tour, including several dates in Britain, Simon flies to London to record with Ladysmith Black Mambazo and announces that prominent anti-apartheid musicians Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba will also be performing with him on the European tour. His manager agrees the *NME* can interview Simon, on condition that Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela are present. The next morning, his record company WEA withdraw the offer.

A telex sent from the African National Congress in Lusaka to their office in Sweden says, "The ANC fully support a boycott action against a Paul Simon European and American tour... he has singularly done more harm in flouting the cultural boycott against the racist regime."

Simon's record company arrange an emergency press conference in London.

THE CONFERENCE

ACCOMPANIED by exiled South African musicians Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela and resident South African musician Ray Perry, Paul Simon opened the conference by reading a short letter he'd written to the United Nations Committee Against Apartheid. He'd drafted it after the UN had requested he clarify his position regarding the cultural boycott in light of growing criticism – from the African National Congress and related anti-apartheid bodies – of his *Graceland* LP and his upcoming European tour. The letter stated that in his own field Simon was working to achieve "the end of the apartheid system" and that he intended to maintain this position "in the context of the UN cultural boycott".

Since the letter had been received, Simon – through American anti-apartheid organiser Harry Belafonte – had been informed that the ANC had reversed their position over *Graceland*, withdrawing criticism and regarding the LP

as legitimate. This position, he now said, would soon be confirmed by ANC leader Oliver Tambo at a press conference in Los Angeles.

Simon said he welcomed the controversy that had accompanied the album as it allowed people "essentially on the same side to clarify their position and reach a unified standpoint".

But hadn't he flouted this unity by not previously consulting or making public his intention to record *Graceland* in South Africa, an action liable to cause division?

"I don't feel as an artist that I have to consult with anyone. I didn't ask for permission to do the project nor did I want any restriction on what I might think or say or write."

If it was his avowed intention to work for the end of apartheid, why had there not been any mention of the South African situation in the album's songs or extensive sleevenotes?

"It is a musical album, I approached the subject from a cultural point of view that has political implications, but I am no expert on South African politics."

Ray Perry outlined his impassioned support for *Graceland* (both album and tour) as it allowed South African musicians to be heard around the world; the cultural boycott was used wrongly if it prevented this: "I know better than some person who has been away from South Africa for 20 years how to run my life. If I'm told I am not allowed certain records, or to perform, by my brothers as well as the government, where am I to run to. Emotionally we would die."

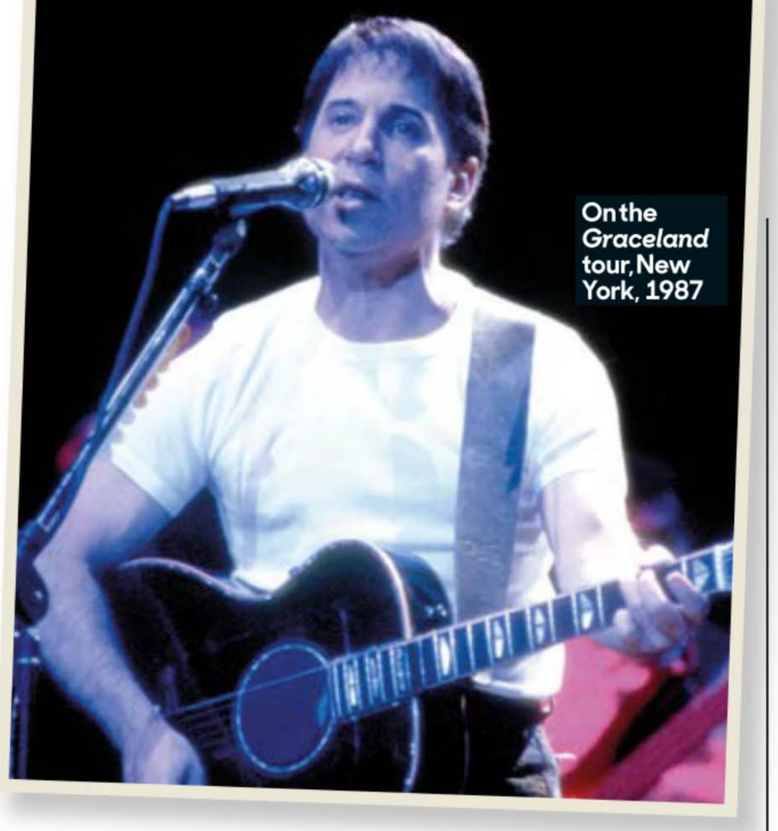
Miriam Makeba underlined her credentials as an exile and apartheid opponent for over 20 years and told how persistent representations to the UN by her on Simon's behalf revealed that he had never been put on the boycott list. However, she too felt that a cultural boycott should not deprive indigenous black musicians from being heard outside their own country, and that the whole policy was in need of clarification and redefinition. Masekela took up her point saying the "policy" was ill formed and put together without proper, widespread consultation with exiled musicians such as himself.

For Simon, the issue of cultural boycott seemed to rest on the decision to play or not play Sun City. He had not, for instance, requested that his album be withdrawn from the South African market: "It was made by South African musicians, why should it not be available to them?"

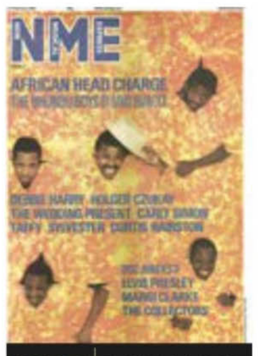
He denied too that he had had any personal contact with the South African government before he had been allowed to work in South Africa. Though the possibility that representations by well-placed Warners personnel could have facilitated the album's recording still remained, Simon felt no need to forward an anti-apartheid message explicitly on the album because "the audience I am used to addressing is a sophisticated one. I assume they know what's happening in South Africa and if they don't, the first time they hear about it shouldn't be from a pop star. Pop music is not a place to argue complex political issues."

Simon maintained that he had nothing to apologise for, and, pending clarification of the ANC policy – perhaps revoking the Lusaka telex – the controversy over *Graceland* looks still to have some way to run.

GAVIN MARTIN



On the *Graceland* tour, New York, 1987



NME 21/2/1987

A news item in last week's NME reported that Artists Against Apartheid were silent on the Paul Simon controversy. Jerry Dammers provided us with this statement as a personal response.

IN LAST week's *NME* the Anti-Apartheid Movement was accused of a "climb-down" over Paul Simon's tour. The movement had not announced any boycott action, so how can it have climbed down? It seems that the movement is going to take flak from some people no matter what it does on this issue. Paul Simon must have known this tour would be controversial at a time when we need unity to fight apartheid. I can't speak for Artists Against Apartheid, but as an individual, I think it's very irresponsible for a pop star to walk into a country where children are being slaughtered in the streets and make a pop LP, as if nothing is going on, especially without consulting the right people (ie, the ANC) first.

Paul Simon has said that he paid the musicians $400 a day, supposedly three times the going rate. In this country, this is the minimum Musicians Union session rate for 15 hours' work (£262.50p). He also said he didn't perform in South Africa, but in the Oxford dictionary to "perform" includes to "sing or play".

At his press conference in London, he claimed that the ANC had "reversed" its policy and that the President, Oliver Tambo, would make a ruling on his individual case a few days later. No such thing happened, of course.

To get things into perspective, I'd like to quote a statement by the National Executive Committee of the ANC on the occasion of their 75th Anniversary, presented by Oliver Tambo on January 8, 1987.

"We can truly say that we have broken through a critical barrier in terms of both world understanding of what is to be done about the apartheid system and the unwillingness of the international community to act. The conditions therefore exist, that in the current period, this community should impose both unilateral and universal comprehensive mandatory sanctions against racist South Africa. Where governments refuse to act, the public at large should respond with people's sanctions. Now is the time for deeds and not words."

It seems that some people, because they quite like *Graceland* and maybe wouldn't mind buying it themselves, keep trying to find excuses for Simon. I just wish he'd never gone to South Africa in the first place. And I think he may be making the same mistake again by carrying on with this tour.

NME 4/4/1987

THE ALBUM has sold more than four million copies worldwide and earned him a new legion of fans. It has topped numerous critics' polls, won him a Grammy, and in February the British Phonographic Industry named him their International Solo Artist of the Year.

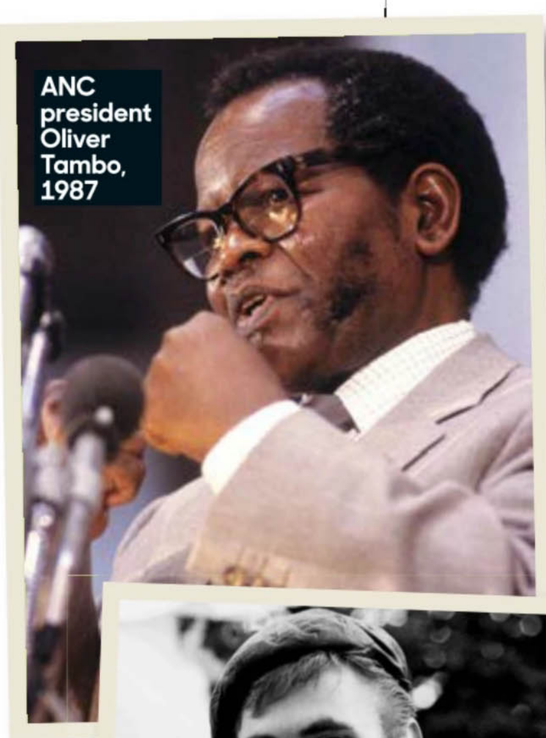
This time last year Paul Simon was considered a has-been, a run-of-the-mill singer-songwriter who had a few great moments in the hazy, halcyon days of Greenwich Village and "Scarborough Fair". There goes Rhymin' Simon – who cares?

Eight months ago he released *Graceland*, an album of 10 songs which was different from anything that had gone before in mainstream pop, let alone Simon's back catalogue. He had received new inspiration, new motivation – a creative ookiss of life and a cultural kick up the ass.

But the laurels of *Graceland* were laced with thorns, because Simon's inspiration came from the black townships of South Africa and he had travelled to Johannesburg to record his new songs. After continually refusing to play Sun City, in the South African homeland of Bophuthatswana, Simon blotted his own copybook. He found another way to break the United Nations' cultural boycott.

United Nations policy calls for "a complete cultural boycott... of any artists from South Africa coming to this country on a temporary basis as well as artists from other countries working from time to time over there". It says nothing explicit about making records in the country, so that Simon's action effectively exploits a loophole in the boycott ruling, although few are prepared to accept Simon's idiosyncratic reading of it.

Opinions have been divided, especially in the States, where one New York critic labelled Simon "a genius and a loathsome coward". Reports have reflected a widespread confusion about the nature and purpose of the cultural boycott, and how it



ANC president Oliver Tambo, 1987

Jerry Dammers at a Rock Against Racism gig, 1981

MARK REINSTEIN/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES;DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS;ROBINPLATZER/IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Simon with Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba during the 1987 *Graceland* world tour

affects not just Simon, but artists within South Africa itself.

The *Graceland* affair started in the summer of 1984 when Simon was sent *Gumboots Accordion Jive Vol 2*, a tape of township music. After brief discussions with a handful of musicians including Quincy Jones and Harry Belafonte – a leading anti-apartheid spokesman in the United States – Simon booked several weeks of studio time in South Africa, where five of the *Graceland* tracks took shape. The recording sessions coincided with the second Sharpeville massacre and several South African musicians were flown to New York for more recording. (Simon claimed to have paid them three times the union rate for work both in South Africa and the States.) On the album's release in August last year, he was criticised for not attacking the apartheid system when he had such a perfect opportunity; nothing in the lyrics or extensive sleeve notes could be interpreted as an anti-apartheid stance.

THE *GRACELAND* world tour, announced last December, includes not only Simon but also Ladysmith Black Mambazo and prominent anti-apartheid musicians Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba, both South African exiles.

Unofficial pickets (student groups and "concerned individuals", but nothing from recognised anti-apartheid organisations) were posted outside recent American shows, but official pickets are likely in London and Birmingham this month. Are they right to picket? Is Simon wrong to play?

Answers from the man himself are hard to come by as he has had very little of substance to say about apartheid. At the time of writing he was "on holiday, somewhere in the sun and totally uncontactable".

The few words available are littered with contradictions. In an interview earlier this year, Simon said: "In a way I had to be a spokesman for the South African musical community. That's why I was allowed to go there. After I got there I found out the musicians had voted to let me come... So now I'm out there saying 'take a listen to this music, world'. That's what they wanted me to say. That's why they voted for me. I feel I owe that to them in exchange for giving me access to the musical community".

"I don't feel as an artist that I have to consult with anyone"

Paul Simon

Yet, less than a month later, at a hastily convened press conference in London, he told the world: "I don't feel as an artist that I have to consult with anyone. I didn't ask for permission to do the project, nor did I want any restriction on what I might think or say or write".

Simon claimed that his original visit to Johannesburg enjoyed the blessing of the African National Congress, but he has never named the people he consulted and the ANC deny any such consultation took place. More plausibly, he has claimed to have discussed his planned trip with his friend Harry Belafonte, a prominent member of the New York Anti-Apartheid Coordinating Council. Reports of Belafonte's response differ.

Dali Tambo, founder of Artists Against Apartheid and a member of the ANC (his father, Oliver, is its president), told *NME*: "Harry says Simon came to him, explained his position, and Harry said 'go and talk to the ANC'. But in seeing Harry he didn't go far enough; he should have taken his advice, which was very solid advice. I think he regrets to this day not taking that advice."

And Sipho Mabuse, a leading South African musician who met Simon in Johannesburg, argues that Simon knew of Belafonte's doubts: "He indicated to me that Belafonte said it wasn't right for him to go there but the ultimate choice was his."

Simon has also argued that he had the approval of the South African musical community: "I don't know the circumstances of their vote, only that they voted whether to do this or not. Once I found out there was a vote, I didn't ask questions. I just accepted that I was in."

But Mabuse disputes this: "It's not true to say that Simon really had the go-ahead from musicians, because he was never really with many musicians in South Africa. He met very few people. I was one of the people he met. I remember precisely the scene. We sat down and had a discussion. And the question of his coming to South Africa as being opposed by anti-apartheid movements was not raised."

Mabuse goes on to point out that any collective body of musicians speaking for the SA musical community would almost certainly have included him, and that he heard of no such decision.

"I'm quite sure I would have known if there was any meetings that were held to discuss it. Not that we had the right to decide who can come to South Africa, but if there was any decision taken

PHIL DENT/REDFERNS

Members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo on stage with Simon during the *Graceland* tour, 1987

I'm quite sure I would probably have been one of the people who would have known."

BY JANUARY of this year, substantial criticisms had been levelled at Simon; that apart from breaking the cultural boycott, he had failed to consult with the ANC; that he had misrepresented the attitudes of the South African people; and that he had acted arrogantly towards the anti-apartheid struggle, both in his initial behaviour and by failing to broach the subject of apartheid on *Graceland*.

There was speculation in anti-apartheid circles that the world tour had been planned – perhaps on Hugh Masekela's advice – as a kind of atonement for Simon's original action. By the tour's inclusion of exiles Masekela and Miriam Makeba (veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle), Ladysmith Black Mambazo and other black South Africans with strong anti-apartheid credentials, and by taking a back seat himself to this live explicit celebration of black South African culture, Simon perhaps hoped to clear the air and satisfy his critics.

But if taking musicians out of South Africa was seen as a way of resolving the problems, it only served to compound it. A telex sent from the ANC headquarters in Lusaka, Zambia stated: "The ANC fully support a boycott action against a Paul Simon European and American tour... He has singularly done more harm in flouting the cultural boycott against the racist regime."

Soon afterwards Simon called the London press conference and read the contents of a letter he had sent to the UN in response to their request for clarification of his position. The letter stated he was working to achieve "the end of the apartheid system" and that he intended to maintain this position "in the context of the UN cultural boycott". He went on to say that he had heard – through Belafonte – that the ANC had reversed its position and withdrawn criticism of the LP and that this would be confirmed by Oliver Tambo at a press conference in Los Angeles two days later.

But when Tambo made no mention of Simon at his conference, the ANC insisted there had been no reversal of policy, and the UN requested further clarification from Simon in the light of his world tour, a further violation of the cultural boycott.

However, reaction to his tour in America has been almost entirely positive, with no organised opposition. His letter to the UN seems to have defused criticisms before they arose from the loose coalition of small groups that make up the (large) US anti-apartheid movement. Although he faced barracking at a press conference at Howard University in Washington and small picket action from student groups in Atlanta and Los Angeles, the overall American picture seems to have been one of forgiveness for Simon's apparent naivety. The concert's finale every night was a mass rendition of "N'Kosi Sikeleli", the anthem of the ANC.

THE DIFFERENT stances taken by anti-apartheid groups in America and Britain reveal confusion as to the exact interpretation of the cultural boycott, all sides agreeing on the need for urgent clarification.

The use of economic and cultural sanctions as weapons against apartheid was first developed in appeals by Father Trevor Huddleston, the founder of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) and in calls for a general boycott by Chief Luthuli of the ANC.

The ANC are the instigators of the boycott but – for practical and political purposes – the exact ruling is contained in a resolution voted for by the United Nations in 1980 and monitored by the UN Special Committee On Apartheid.

"We've put ourselves in a situation where really the authority is the UN," says Dali Tambo, explaining the ANC position. "It's preferable for us, because as a movement we can say to people what we require because we have the moral authority as the representatives of the people of South Africa, but we can't always rely on their acquiescence."

In each country boycott actions are co-ordinated by the relevant anti-apartheid groups. As Alan Brooks, assistant secretary of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain, points out: "The UN boycott is a marker from which to work, but there's no 10 commandments, no single formula which represents the letter of the law."

In the past, this disparity has occasionally led to odd situations. In 1985, the Malopoets, a black Sowetan group of considerable standing in the townships, found themselves in direct conflict with the British Musicians' Union, who argued that they should not be playing at a GLC Festival, and banned their video from TV showing. Yet this came immediately after a show the Malopoets played at the newly opened Theatre of Human Rights in Paris before an audience that included French President Mitterand and Bishop Desmond Tutu.

Likewise, Simon's show in Harare was reportedly a celebration of solidarity between the frontline states and the people of South Africa.

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS

Simon with musicians who contributed to *Graceland*, including guitarist Ray Phiri (second right) and Ladysmith Black Mambazo founder Joseph Shabalala (right), London, 1987

Although Zimbabwe has in the past taken a tough line on sanctions, questions about Simon's actions were not raised publicly.

Alan Brooks says of the Harare show: "The frontline states like Zimbabwe serve as a meeting ground for South Africans at home and in exile to promote the solidarity between them. Therefore it would be odd to protest against the concerts there, but here it is another matter. We are a country, like the United States, which must clearly stand for effective international sanctions against South Africa."

Although there is a range of possible interpretations of the terms of the boycott, there are attendant difficulties in all. One position is that the cultural boycott should be seen as part of the economic boycott – that records, books and films, even those with explicit anti-apartheid content, are actually commodities, and that industry can use them as a cover for breaking the economic boycott. So where should the line be drawn?

"For us it's clearly unmanageable to get into the whole business of assessing each and every record that comes out," says Alan Brooks.

"It's not the content that's really decisive. I think it's only a matter of time before it reasserts itself. At the end of the day I think performers in South Africa will recognise that the struggle is best served by not opening the doors to a flood of cultural exports from the country. Once you move in that direction you simply cannot sustain a credible boycott policy.

"The problem is that we can be seen as insensitive to the aspirations of South African artists, but the simple truth is that the majority do not get the chance to be exported, they have to make their lives in South Africa. We have had to live with these dilemmas, it's part of the cruelty of apartheid. The cost involved in implementing a boycott is bearable because it is less than the cost of living under the system."

The same dilemma faces the ANC and Artists Against Apartheid according to Dali Tambo.

"Inside the country over the last couple of years there has been a swelling of expression through culture because there has been a stamping out of any other form of expression. Of course a lot of it is very radical cultural activity and it cannot be contained within the country. It's a matter of how we react to it coming out."

At present the ANC is debating its own policy, not with a view to reversing their position, but to meet the need for clarification and flexibility in response to the changing situation within South Africa.

"It is a matter we have been discussing, especially since the development with Paul Simon and the crowd that's round him," says Tom Sebina, ANC information officer in Lusaka. "We are discussing the situation regarding musicians and other entertainers coming out of South Africa and performing elsewhere in the world and whether it is wise for them to do so."

In the meantime, the rule of thumb is the need for consultation. Dali Tambo says: "If you're going into the country, then you must consult with the ANC. Because we're saying that we presume that whatever cultural field you're involved in, you do not want it to be used to further the aims of apartheid and the racist regime. Therefore you consult with us so that we can put you wise about whether or not we think you will be used by apartheid, and about the effect of your cultural activities.

"It's not to say, 'Right, show us your scripts, take out that and that', it's simply to say, 'Look, we think you're moving into dangerous territory.'

"If Paul Simon had come to us first and discussed this, none of this shit would have happened."

Wally Serote, cultural worker for the ANC in Britain, says there should be double consultation: "People inviting cultural workers out of the country must consult with the ANC – cultural workers coming out must consult with the Mass Democratic Movement."

"If Paul Simon had come to us first, none of this shit would have happened"
Dali Tambo

IN THE WAKE of Simon's LP and tour, the music industry has been galvanised into unprecedented interest in South African artists. EMI has cobbled together *Sounds Of Soweto*, a compilation of township pop, which has been criticised for its poor selections and the dubious motives behind its release; major South African investor Shell are rumoured to be putting together a tour of young black South African musicians; WEA are releasing Ladysmith Black Mambazo's *Shaka Zulu*, a new collection produced by Paul Simon; and Greensleeves have licensed a further three albums from Ladysmith's back catalogue. Meanwhile, Sipho Mabuse has signed to Virgin, and Johnny Clegg, formerly of Juluka, who is featured on the EMI album with his new group Savuka, is planning UK dates.

Mabuse and Clegg have exemplary anti-apartheid histories in South Africa, but it remains to be seen whether Simon's indiscretions will affect their reception in this country.

In the next year it is likely that cultural activity will intensify; a number of plays and films are currently in the planning stages. How they will be received depends on the outcome of the ANC discussions. But the signs are that there will be a small move towards consideration of each production on its own merits, although the basic position will remain unchanged.

Meanwhile the UN await further clarification from Paul Simon on his attitude to the cultural boycott and the struggle of the South African people, because none of his statements to date have contained anything but vague platitudes and misleading claims.

As Dali Tambo stresses: "He had a golden opportunity there, if he was going to break the cultural boycott, to have so much credibility, to really hit out and to do his own reputation a hell of a lot of good. And to make a hell of a lot of money anyway.

"But what troubles me about Paul Simon is – who did he consult with when he went there? He didn't consult with us." ●

TERRY STAUNTON AND MARK SINKER

Simon collects an Album Of The Year Grammy for *Graceland*, Shrine Auditorium, LA, February 24, 1987

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES; BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

RELEASED: 16 OCTOBER | **1990**

The Rhythm Of The Saints

There goes Roamin' Simon, as his musical journey continues over whole continents. He acknowledges privilege and thrives. **BY MARK BEAUMONT**

DILEMMA. Your collaboration with South African musicians in Johannesburg has revived your floundering career and placed you front and centre of an impressive roll call of major western artists – Gabriel, Sting, Kate Bush – exploring global cultures and championing what would become known as "world music" in the '80s. But it also got you in hot water with the anti-apartheid movement pitting you, politically, against the very cultures to which you were trying give widespread exposure.

Luckily it's 1989 and there's a whole musical world out there, largely unmapped by western pop music. So with the South African guitar licks of Ray Phiri, the Cameroonian bass of André Manga and the flugelhorn of Hugh Masekela in his back pocket, Simon flew down to Rio to work his pan-cultural *Graceland* magic on the music of Latin and South America.

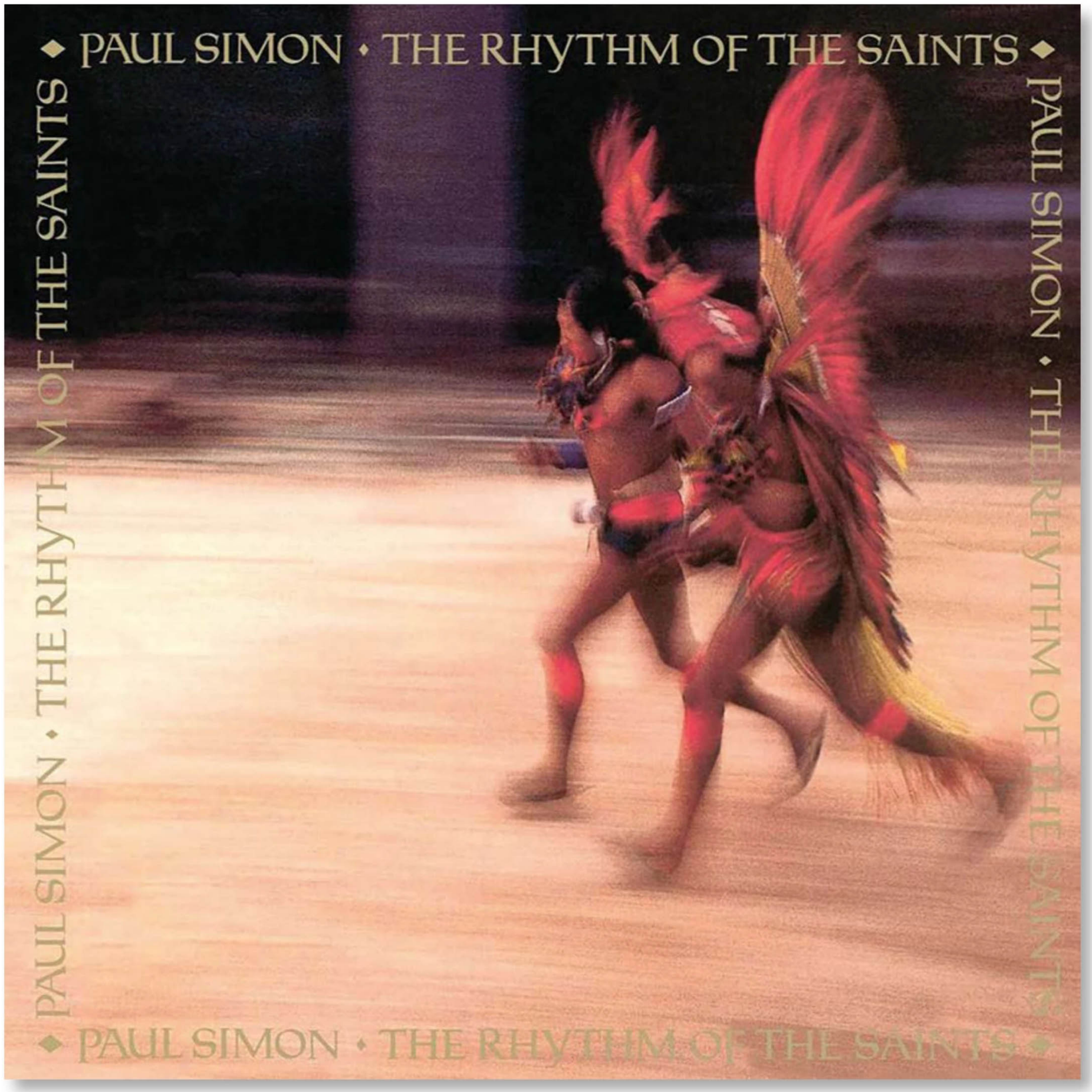
Where *Graceland* had sharpened its focus on the South African townships and America's Deep South, T*he Rhythm Of The Saints* took in a continent-wide panorama. Album opener and first single "The Obvious Child" – the album's only hit either side of the Atlantic – might have ruminated poetically on how life decays us all, but it did so buoyed by the effervescent carnival Batucada drumming of Grupo Cultural Odolum, recorded live in Pelourinho Square in the group's home city of Salvador from microphones hung from the windows. Guitarra baiana master Armandinho brought elaborate Bahia textures, and drummers Francisco Aguabella and Giovanni Hidalgo provided Afro-Cuban and Puerto Rican conga touches respectively. With numerous players arriving from across Brazil and far beyond, ...*Saints* aspired to reflect the spiritual heart and creative essence of the continent, a musical travelogue to compliment *Graceland*'s snappily-writ postcard.

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Where Simon breaks from sleepy sophistication, his guests do most of the work. Which does rather suggest he is not so much raising his global pals' profiles as recharging his own jaded talent with their skill and energy"
Stephen Dalton, NME, October 27, 1990

To that end, the album indulged in more sacred, intangible atmospheres too. "Can't Run But" opened on images of Chernobyl in the aftermath of the 1986 reactor disaster (*"A cooling system burns out in the Ukraine/Trees and umbrellas protect us from the new rain"*), but drifted by on the misty marimba and percussive mania of Amazonian ritual; "Further To Fly" added fado guitars, pan-pipes and Latin melodicism to create an earthy mood piece that seemed a more wistful cousin to Peter Gabriel's "The Rhythm Of The Heat". Even on featherlight hula pop tunes like the title track or "She Moves On", an impressionistic recalling of Simon's split with Carrie Fisher, the tone is of colder, more meditative Caribbean sunsets.

Yet this wasn't merely a new chapter in some sonic backbacker's journal. Aware, perhaps, of the need to bring the *Graceland* faithful with him on his journey west, the Afrobeat flavour carried over, mingling with the Latin American tones to create a worldly stew. It's most noticeable on "Spirit Voices", a song co-written with Brazilian singer-songwriter Milton Nascimento and telling of a trip up the Amazon to take part in an ayahuasca ceremony, but drenched in the sounds of Soweto. "The Coast" was a similarly pan-continental endeavour, buzzing with insects and wildlife as a backdrop and weaving its yarn of a band of musical troubadours taking refuge in "*the little harbour church of St Cecilia*" (see what he did there?) over some of the most endearing African pop tones of his career. "Proof" even set out to repeat the MTV lightning strike of "You Can Call Me Al", finding the hidden join between brassy, intricate Afrobeat and western funk-pop and filling the video with comedians playing saxophones – Chevy Chase returned, now joined by Steve Martin parping trumpets from a carnival float and performing an MC Hammer dance routine with Simon.



It was, after all, the inclusive, well-meaning good humour with which Simon approached his late-'80s cultural adventures that made them palatable for the western mainstream and allowed him to survive the *Graceland* backlash. Even if ...*Saints* had a more amorphous, spiritual feel, Simon's role within it was still to act as relatable guide making the cultural connections, his eyes and ears as opened by the experience as the listener's. Which is why two tracks lurking midway through are its heart. "Cool, Cool River" draws a previously indistinguishable line between South American rhythms and Greenwich Village, Simon using Latin and African percussion grooves to carry some scat inflections and allowing them to dissolve into segments of pure *Sounds Of Silence* throwback folk, interrupted with brazen blasts of African horns. New York and Johannesburg have never sounded so blissfully married.

Then there was "Born At The Right Time", a song which essentially defined and justified Simon's entire "world music" journey. "*Me and my buddies, we are travelling people,*" he sighed over a masterpiece of subtle, sunny Afrobeat, "*never had to scuffle in fear, nothing denied to*". It's the confession of privilege, a western cultural tourist acknowledging the unfairness and injustice in the situation he's concocted by working with musicians from very different economic and social background in places far removed from New Jersey, and honouring their daily struggle. If Simon had learnt anything from his musical travels, it was to count his many blessings.

The Rhythm Of The Saints blessed him with a second multi-platinum UK No 1 in a row, his last to date. He celebrated with a tour that included a second concert in Central Park, 10 years after his reunion with Art Garfunkel at the heart of NYC. Attendance estimates vary from 50,000 to 750,000, which would make a show heavy on *Graceland* and ...*Saints* tracks one of the biggest live shows in history, fitting for a period of Simon's career which helped to unite the world's sonic diaspora more than any before. Global musical borders were flung open by these records and, though it would take decades for such adventuring to lose the stigma of rich white rock stars assimilating poorer cultures (thanks to the likes of MIA and blatant *Graceland* disciples Vampire Weekend), music's mixing pot was far richer as a result.

> He'd never again immerse himself so thoroughly in foreign sounds

For Simon's part, he'd soon hang up his gumboots, his travelling days done. Though he'd never again immerse himself so thoroughly in foreign sounds, or reach such giddy commercial heights by doing so, when he finally returned to the studio at the end of the '90s the rhythms of the saints had settled into the marrow of his music, defining his post-Garfunkel career. From this point on he'd be Roamin' Simon, global musical benefactor, king of the wildest frontiers. ●

SLEEVENOTES | The Rhythm Of The Saints

1. The Obvious Child ★★★★★
2. Can't Run But ★★★★
3. The Coast ★★★★
4. Proof ★★★★
5. Further To Fly ★★★
6. She Moves On ★★★★
7. Born At The Right Time ★★★★★
8. The Cool, Cool River ★★★
9. Spirit Voices ★★★
10. The Rhythm Of The Saints ★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Producer: Paul Simon
Personnel includes: Paul Simon (vocals, guitar), Ladysmith Black Mambazo (vocals), Grupo Cultural Olodum (drums), Milton Nascimento (vocals), Adrian Belew (synth), JJ Cale (guitar), Hugh Masekela (flugelhorn), Ray Phiri (guitar), Armandinho (guitar), Nana Vasconcelos (perc), Steve Gadd (drums)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 4

"It seems less likely that the hits I make are going to be singles"

PAUL SIMON returns from Rio grooving to *The Rhythm Of The Saints*. All is not one big carnival though — he pines for less corporate times, still mourns JFK and is dogged by more *Graceland* controversy in the shape of a lost Los Lobos credit. "If it's about the arrangement of the background track," he explains to GAVIN MARTIN, "that to me is not songwriting."

TIM JARVIS

"I don't stop and think why I'm curious about something": Paul Simon in London, 1990

NME 27/10/90

WE are seated in rows of desks like attentive pupils at a business seminar. Upfront, the guy with the radio mic, showroom dummy suit and million dollar corporate smile is laying it on with a trowel.

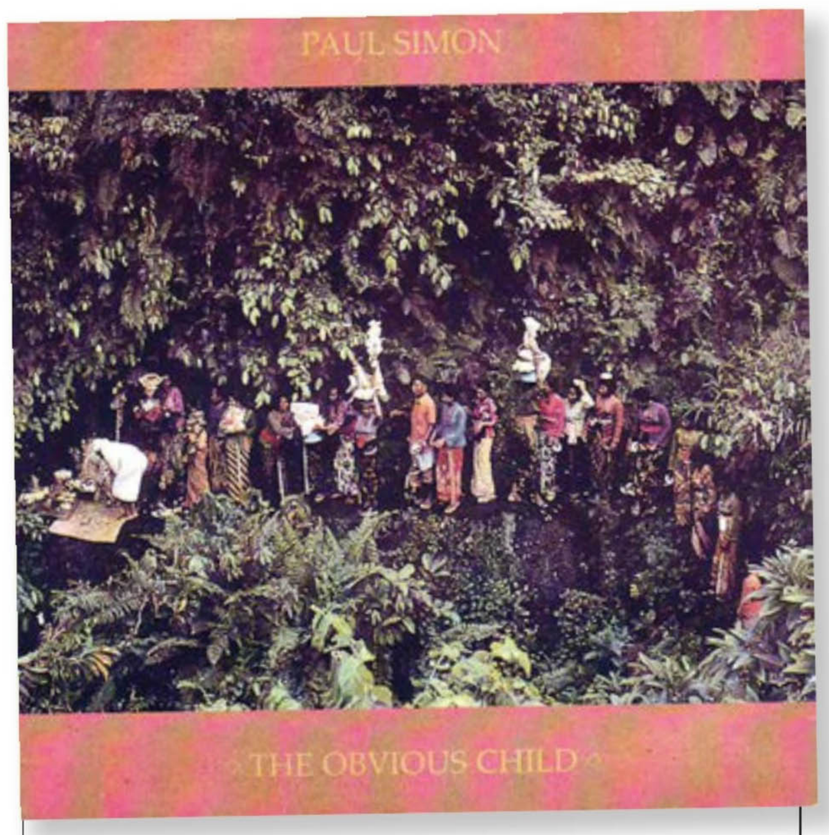
He's telling us how honoured we are to be here, how four years ago we were gathered for the launch of *Graceland* ("very much one of the albums of the '80s") and today we're here to talk about what he thinks will be "one of the albums of the '90s". Paul Simon's new record *Rhythm Of The Saints*.

Press conferences are always stage managed to a degree, but the reception for the singer-songwriter and musical explorer from New York is marked by a particularly vulgar brand of sycophancy and over-protectiveness.

Perhaps his charges are wary of the gloomy depression and sensitivity to which Paul Simon is prone. They're probably aware of his reputation for being difficult, diffident and suspicious of strangers. They probably know about his psychiatric case history recounted in an interview before *Graceland* revived his career. They've probably heard about the stage-fright nightmares that used to precede his live performances – he'd dream that he'd go on stage and the mic would be too high for him or that he was trapped, Spinal Tap style, in a glass cage and no-one could hear him.

When "the man himself" does take the stage you notice two things – his curious hairpiece and what Winnie Mandela referred to as his "pocket sized" stature. The bullshit build-up seems inappropriate, he looks kind of helpless and out of place. It's an image that hits you again when you see him on kids' TV over the weekend.

But then Paul Simon has probably always looked out of place. He probably looked out of place when he was a teen star on *American Bandstand* in the '50s alongside hellfire-spouting Jerry Lee Lewis. He definitely must have looked out of place jamming backstage with axe player from another planet Jimi Hendrix at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967. More recently he's looked out



of place on stage with his *Graceland* live band or at the feet of a tribal doctor in the Brazilian rainforest in thrall of some mildly euphoric herbal potion, an experience recounted on the dreamy "Spirit Voices", the penultimate track on "one of the albums of the '90s".

Simon sounds humble, almost apologetic, as he greets the press. As well he might. Most of the

"Studio musicians are paid their fee and they're there to create and to play"

Paul Simon

assembled hacks have heard nary a twitter from the new record. This would seemingly dispense with any probing questions and allow Paul to explain the story of its inception in a soft childlike voice of wide-eyed wonder. He tells us about his fascination with the drums of African Catholic religions in Brazil. Originally he only went there to record them out of curiosity. He wasn't even planning to make a record as he was working on a Broadway musical at the time

Admittedly there was the vague intention of developing a Brazilian project – whenever he got stuck or developed writer's block on his musical. Simon's trouble with writer's block is well documented; before his Brazilian journey he hadn't written any songs since *Graceland*, and in the early '80s he suffered a creative crisis after his *One Trick Pony* LP and movie flopped and his marriage to Carrie Fisher disintegrated.

But shortly after he arrived in Brazil in the summer of 1987 he chanced upon the drum troupe Olodum and recorded them playing the percussive barrage that provides "The Obvious Child" with the most brilliant intro and backbeat of any single this year. The musical was put on hold for the next three years while Simon set out on the increasingly sluggish and laborious work pattern which would result in *The Rhythm Of The Saints*.

He had no songs, they'd be developed gradually over drum tracks culled from sessions recorded with various Brazilian percussionists and guitar patterns developed by Cameroonian Vincent Nguini. Over the next few weeks, months and years, Simon would improvise words, melodies and eventually phrases that would become lyrics. He was recording all over the globe, a trail of trial and error that brought him from Rio to Salvador, from New York to Paris and down to Louisiana.

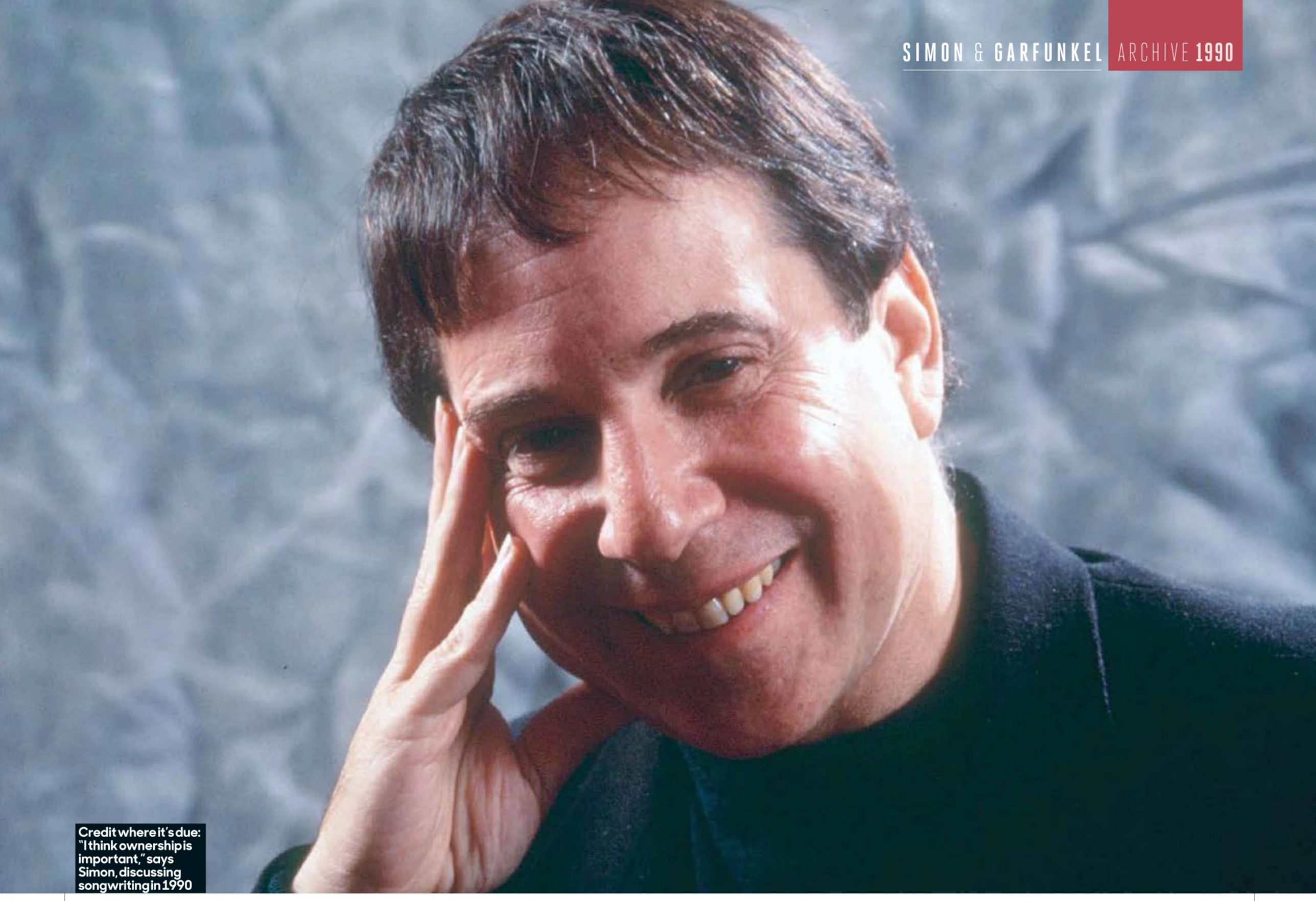
Later he'll explain that his journey was a way of trying to relocate and create the sounds and emotions that he heard in music as a middle-class kid in Forest Hills, New York. He's recounted the experience before in the song "Late In The Evening", where the magical sounds of doo-wop and '50s rock'n'roll led to a world of wonder outside his teenage suburban no-man's land.

Back at the press conference he's waxing lyrical about his latest artistic endeavour. "I tried to approach the album as a complete piece of work rather than individual songs. So I was always working on the album as a whole. I let one song drift into another; I was always writing in an arc."

This is all very well, but Rick Glanvill, editor of *Worldbeat* magazine, has a question that has been bothering quite a few of us for a while now. Simon's New York management and his British record company know all about Glanvill's question; he's been in contact with them for some months trying to set up an interview with Simon. Glanvill's interest has been fuelled by an interview given to him by Los Lobos some weeks previously. Critics (and I include myself here) have used many words to describe Paul Simon, words like "genius", "innovator", "brilliant", "intellectual". But Los Lobos added a few epithets of their own – names like "scumbag" and "shit". The band had been thrilled and honoured when they'd

"It was a learning experience...": Los Lobos, who were asked to collaborate on a track from *Graceland*

PAUL HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES



Credit where it's due: "I think ownership is important," says Simon, discussing songwriting in 1990

been asked to collaborate on a track for *Graceland* ("one of the albums of the '80s", after all). But they'd been taken aback when they arrived in the studio to hear Simon ask them to simply start playing, to knock musical ideas around and provide the stimulus for a man justly celebrated as one of the greatest songwriters of his day.

"This was Paul Simon – we thought he'd have loads of songs, songs coming out his ears," they later recounted ruefully.

Perhaps naively, perhaps stupidly, Los Lobos went ahead and recorded with Simon without establishing any ground rules. The result was the song "The Myth Of Fingerprints", for which Simon took sole credit. Indeed, according to Los Lobos it took them a long time to secure a fee for their performance and they're still narked about their creative input. (When I contacted the band they were more circumspect: "Let's just say it was a learning experience," was all they'd say.)

Glanvill had sent a transcript of his Los Lobos interview to Simon's management hoping to get Simon's side of the story but experienced the same problems in getting through to the man as the East LA R&B outfit had. Although invited to the press conference, Glanvill's invitation had been lost in the post, but he came along anyway. So he asked Simon the obvious question: if Olodum and Nguini had provided the basis for the songs on what was going to be "one of the albums of the '90s", had they got any writing credit?

"No, Vincent has a co-writing credit for the song 'The Coast' and he gets credit for arranging the guitars. But it's not the writing of the song, he's arranging the guitar parts. The rhythm tracks are drum tracks and the musicians are paid according to whatever deal is struck up beforehand."

It's an answer that leaves a lot unexplained and after the conference Simon requests a private meeting with Glanvill. He is told that Paul doesn't really want to discuss the matter in public. The meeting is brief, questions are still left unanswered and arrangements are made for a longer interview later in the year in New York, possibly at Simon's office in the Brill Building. (The Brill Building is famed as the centre of the music publishing industry in which Paul Simon has a formidable stake; as well as owning the copyright on all his own compositions he reputedly has the rights to an unspecified number of songs in current usage, making him one of the wealthiest men in the business.)

The next day when I meet Paul Simon it's easy to forget the formidable business power he has built up around him. His greatest work has always summoned a rare delicacy, a sweet-voiced innocence alongside some of the most maturely developed songwriting in adult pop, and in person he's a nice guy with a gentle nature. How much of it is faked I'm not sure. I do know that after the interview Simon cut short a photo session with *NME*'s Tim Jarvis after only three minutes. He gave no reason, simply said he'd had enough.

As Tim left the hotel he was approached by a guy from Simon's record company. The guy was heated and angry; thinking Tim had conducted the interview, he began to harangue him. Apparently Paul had been upset by the interview and was refusing to make two TV appearances that had been lined up (he changed his mind shortly afterward; that weekend Simon was on TV at least three times). This was news to me; certainly it can't have been the most scintillating interview either of us had taken part in, but it seemed to end amicably enough with small talk about Belfast, New York and the US crack epidemic.

The record company later put it down to a misunderstanding – perhaps Paul was frayed after a day of nonstop interviews. I'd love to think they were right but naturally wondered what had got him hot under the hairpiece. Listening back to the interview tape, it seemed to be when I asked him to expand on the songwriting question.

Given the way you now choose to work, is songwriting credit a problem?

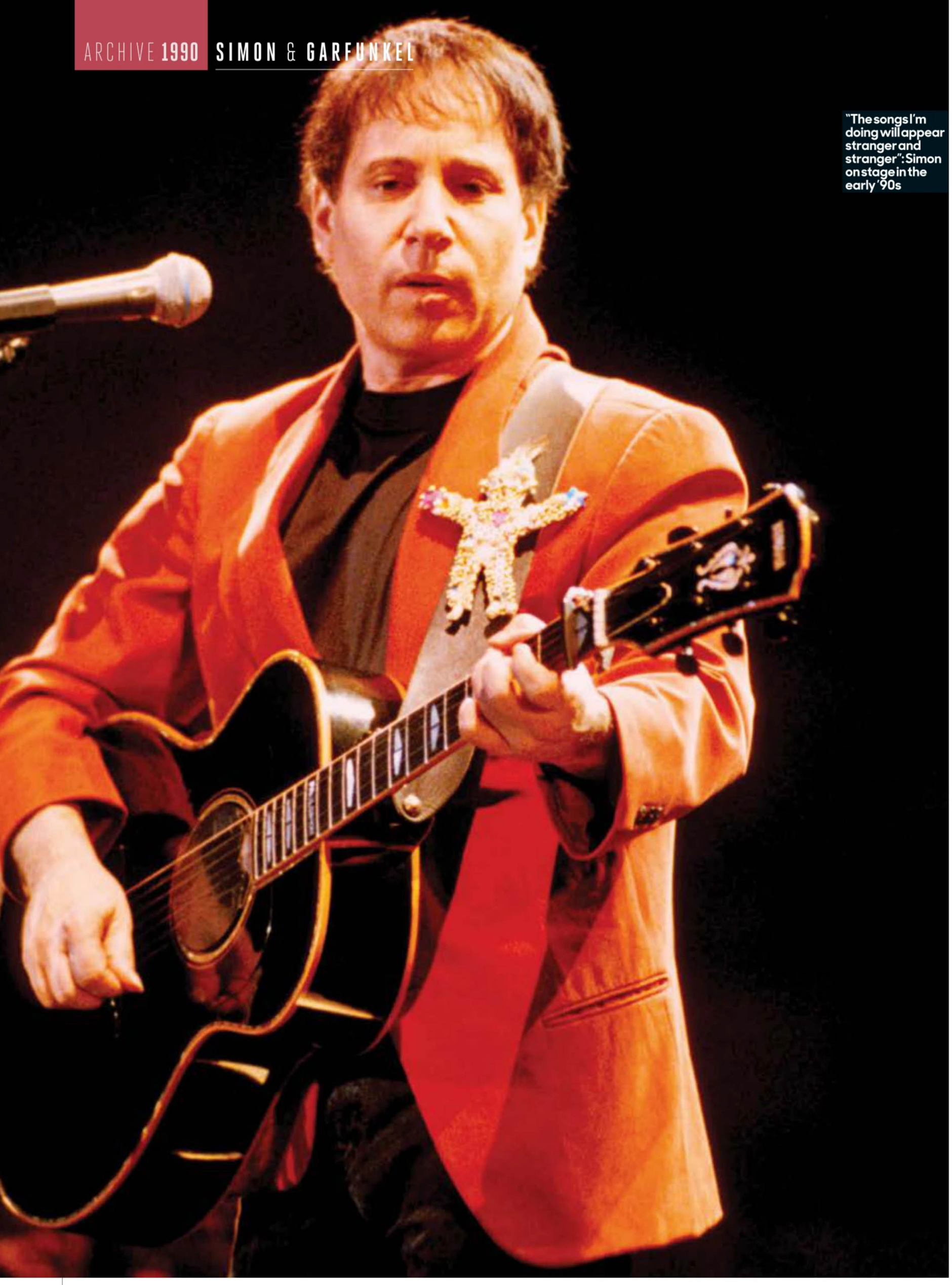
"No, it's not a problem at all. In what sense would it be a problem?"

Well you've said that culture is only an idea, that there should be no demarcation between musicians from one country playing with musicians from another. That's a healthy outlook, but there's a very definite copyright on songs that grow out of these cultural alignments. Do you think the songwriting industry is good for music?

"I think copyright is important and I think ownership is important. Before *Graceland* I don't think anybody sufficiently credited musicians that they worked with; they certainly didn't pay them royalties. When you go into a studio with studio musicians and they're paid their fee, they're there to create and to play, that's what they're paid for.

"When Steve Gadd came in and played his unique drum sound on '50 Ways To Leave Your Lover', that contributed greatly to the success of that song but that was his job to come in and be a creative drummer. He charged a significant amount of money to come in and do that

PHOTOREPORTERS/SHUTTERSTOCK



"The songs I'm doing will appear stranger and stranger": Simon on stage in the early '90s

IANDICKSON/REDFERNS

because he was a very creative drummer. In all of these cases I always make arrangements with musicians beforehand, everybody agrees and we proceed."

Simon used to view the crediting of arrangements as a compromise. Speaking shortly after the demise of Simon & Garfunkel, he recalled, "We always said Artie does the arranging. Anybody who knows anything would know that was a fabrication. How can one guy write the songs and the other do the arranging? How does that happen? If a guy writes a song he obviously has a concept."

Nowadays he seems to have developed a more complex way of working and a new rationale that contradicts that statement.

"If the contribution the musician makes has influenced the actual song as opposed to the arrangement of the record, that is something that would have to do with songwriting credit. But if it's about the arrangement of the background track, that to me is not songwriting. To me songwriting is words and the melody, the making of the record is another category. The contributors to the making of the record may be so significant that their compensation is, ahh, would be greater than an ordinary musician. And in fact I've paid many musicians a royalty for playing their instruments though they didn't write the songs. In my mind that's not only a fair compensation but virtually unique in the business. I don't know anybody else who has done it."

"We always said Artie does the arranging… That was a fabrication"

Paul Simon

THE Rhythm Of The Saints may be saddled with a controversy like the now-resolved cultural boycott question that hung over the *Graceland* album and tour. There are already rumours of discontent from some Brazilian collaborators and the question will be debated for a long time. Sadly but inevitably the music may get lost in the debate, but these questions need to be resolved and Simon's working methods discussed. However, when the dust clears it is unlikely that *Rhythm Of The Saints* will prove as significant an artistic breakthrough as *Graceland*.

Of course, being a Paul Simon record it has many qualities to commend it – impeccable musicianship, beautiful vocals and the occasional polished-to-perfection lyrical gem. But this balmy, exotic confection suggests Simon has temporarily forsaken or lost his melodic gift, thus inflaming the songwriting saga further and losing clarity and commitment in extravagant mood pieces which drift around fragmented lyrical impressions.

There's a pallid quality and a lack of the focus which was present on *Graceland*; the semi-autobiographical "The Obvious Child" is the only thing that has an immediate kick. "The man himself" is well aware of this.

"As time goes on it seems less and less likely that the hits I make are going to be singles. The songs that I'm doing will appear stranger and stranger to people whether I go to another continent to record them or not. I suspect people will find the work I do to be farther away from mainstream pop because I never pay any attention to it.

"An album like *Rhythm Of The Saints* has a subject matter which connects it and I find I can use elements from one song and they can be recapitulated in another song. I use a sound in one song and use the exact same sound in another song or repeat a line in one song that's already been in another. It's very conscious."

The release of the album was put on hold when the tiny maestro, sensitive to comments of those close to him, decided to remix it. Who advised him to make the eleventh-hour alteration?

"Oh, it wasn't advice – they were a little embarrassed to say they couldn't hear the words enough," he says sounding coy and defensive.

"I think we'd gotten so used to the songs that we

could hear the words clearly. The most important aspect to the record is the rhythm, which is not to say I don't try hard to write interesting lyrics, I do, but the album's about rhythms; it's called *The Rhythm Of The Saints*, it's not called 'The Lyrics Of The Saints'.

"So I was trying to keep the rhythm up there at the same level as the vocal and make the vocal just the same level as a regular instrument. But my impression was that it was confusing people and I agreed, I thought it was confusing."

Simon has always been a drifter and an explorer. After enjoying teen success with school chum Art Garfunkel as Tom & Jerry, he went to England and toured the folk clubs before returning home to renew his old partnership. Although Simon & Garfunkel became an institution and enjoyed riches without end, Simon was often frustrated and unhappy with his lot. When the duo parted ways, Simon skilfully matched his commercial instinct with a love of lyrical sophistication and musical adventure.

His songwriting reached a peak on the critically acclaimed but commercially shunned *Hearts And Bones*. Writers like Raymond Cheever and John Updike, and poets like Derek Walcott, sated his increasing hunger for lyrical inspiration. Musically, gospel outfits like The Dixie Hummingbirds, New Orleans genius Allen Toussaint and most recently South African township jive provided enrichment.

Nowadays he's recognised as a pan-pop surrealist and likes to think of himself outside of the music business's corporate structure. On his new album he talks of the music suffering while the music business thrives, an idea he returns to throughout the album.

"We're in a period of time where corporate thinking has more effect upon how people make music than musical thinking. We've been in these periods before in the '50s and '60s with teen idols like the Frankie Avalons and the Fabians. You have it now with MTV and groups that are packaged for the way they look rather than their musical ability.

"We've had it before in the early '60s and the reaction came out of Liverpool. Absolutely non-corporate, The Beatles changed everybody's mind. It happened again in the '70s – everything got slick again and there was a reaction to that in the form of punk. Rap started out the same way, small labels operating outside of the music business."

But these sea changes had little effect on Simon's singular career. Punk had little effect as he drifted from the '70s into middle age and midlife crisis. Then, coming out of his writer's block, a short-lived reunion tour and album with Art Garfunkel put him back in the public eye. The imprint of rap is nowhere to be found on his new album (unless his songwriting method can be labelled organic sampling) and it wasn't even the Fab Four that persuaded him to come to Britain in the early '60s.

He came here because he was shocked and upset by the death of John F Kennedy.

"I just wanted to get out. I was very upset about it, I had to get away."

His voice almost cracks as he recalls the event; it still seems to be very upsetting for him to recall the event. But President Kennedy has since been revealed as the instigator of the Vietnam War, a man fuelled on spy novels who tried to overthrow Castro with the Bay Of Pigs invasion. To Americans of Simon's generation he was a figure that signalled a new age of optimism, but why now with the hindsight of history should his death still be so upsetting?

"You think there are people who don't understand why the Kennedy assassination was so upsetting?"

I don't quite realise at the time but Simon is flabbergasted and outraged, affronted, his voice shaky. Perhaps I'm being insensitive, but it seems to me his reaction to the Kennedy assassination would signal a recurring facet in both his work and his nature. He's the bright, shining lad in the '60s school that sired such crusty old buzzards as Neil Young, Bob Dylan and Lou Reed. As they rage and fail against the dying light, Paul sails in on placid, tranquil waters, his muse lifted by a dream of cultural unity.

"I grew up at a time when nobody was ever assassinated and suddenly a president of the United States was shot; a young president, a vigorous president, an idealistic president that youth identified with. Violence hadn't yet permeated the society; it was beginning, but that was the first instance. It was symptomatic of what was to come and it was a shock, a big shock."

In many ways he's the polar opposite to Dylan, forever placing his faith in the enriching possibility of America as a great democratic idea. And yet people of his generation have been kicked in the teeth again and again – Vietnam, Watergate, Cambodia, Ollie North, Reagan.

You've been lied to, shat on, pushed around and had your faith tramped in the dirt time and time again, isn't the country a sham?

"Aww no, the country is not a sham. The political process for America and most of the western

"The album's about rhythms": in Brazil during production of Simon's eighth solo record *The Rhythm Of The Saints*, 1990

EVERETT COLLECTION INC / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Ponderin' Simon: "What I do has it's effect upon the culture"

countries is incredibly influenced by television and the media. The candidates that we get are chosen by their parties because they come across well on television, it's the main form of communication. Their backgrounds and histories are scrutinised to such a degree that people who are disinclined to have that occur would not participate in the electoral process. So you're going to get a leadership which is telegenic and has lived a relatively sin-free life as defined by the most conservative value systems.

"Idealism is often superseded by cynicism. It's easy, it's easy to convince people to be greedy; it's hard to convince people to be idealistic and it's hard to convince people that they should have an enlightened self-interest, that they should look beyond the immediate future to an extended future and to think about their self-interest in longer terms. That's not a characteristic of Americans or western Europeans, so we'll pay the price for that. I'm not the first person to point this out – that's one of the reasons that leadership in America has been less than inspiring as far as I'm concerned. Not that the other party has put up anything significantly better."

In earlier times, before the days of philanthropic rock-star enlightenment, Simon talked casually about his wealth. He once told an interviewer: "I know I'm richer than most people and I'm grateful to society for putting me in that position. Of course I'm spoiled; that's one of the luxuries of being successful. I take advantage, I think that's what you're supposed to do."

His wealth was an enviable sidebar to his

"It's hard to convince people that they should look beyond the immediate future"

Paul Simon

elegant and often introspective songs; nowadays it's a platform for charitable work (his latest press release tells how he established The Children's Health Fund for homeless New York kiddies) and his standing allows his concern to take on an international political position. Most recently he was in Czechoslovakia watching for any chicanery during the elections.

"I was just an observer with a US delegation to see things were being run fairly, that people were allowed into the polling booths. I was invited by a friend of mine who is a senator. While I was there, Vaclav Havel asked me to sing and we spent some time together, just talking.

"I don't have any political aspirations. I definitely could not pass the scrutiny test that candidates have to go through. I'm purely a product of rock'n'roll and that generation, and did everything that generation did. Anyway, I'm happy with what I do and what I do has its effect upon the culture and its effect upon people's thinking, to whatever degree. It might not be a major effect, but that's fine by me."

How do you feel about an America where Ike Turner, James Brown and Sly Stone are imprisoned and George Bush, J Gordon Liddy and Richard Nixon aren't?

"That's a very simplistic definition of America to say that. America is such a complex place; America is the multiracial society, it's the greatest experiment in multi-ethnic multiracial society that's going on the planet. Since I think the planet is inevitably going to end up mixing, it's extremely important that this experiment succeeds.

"What's happening now is that the impulse towards assimilation that brought people to America, that made people feel 'I can come from anywhere and have a freedom of opportunity', that impulse towards assimilation is shrinking. To me that's a very unfortunate thing when blacks say, 'I don't want any part of white America,' and whites say, 'Great, we don't want any part of you'."

In his art and in his public pronouncements Paul Simon has spent most of the last five years trying to bring calm, a bridge over troubled waters. Continuing a thread which runs through his life's work, he says he's using native cultures "to orchestrate the sounds in his head". He says he feels comfortable now with songs that have opposite opinions, that trying to find out what he feels about something shouldn't be an easy task.

I know the feeling, I get it when I think about Paul Simon. On the one hand he's made some of the music I most cherish in my record collection; on the other I'm not entirely convinced that he's showing the same generosity of spirit in his dealings that runs through his songs. I admire his pie-eyed idealistic vision of America but I'm not sure I trust it. I long for some sense of rage, urgency or purpose on his new record and find it wanting.

I ask him if he ever ponders his situation or relationship to the musics he now absorbs and he dryly notes that Pablo Picasso was able to use African influences in his art and that he didn't ruin African culture; in fact he possibly enriched it.

Maybe it's a fair point, maybe Simon's current work can be compared to the old Spanish artist. Simon stumbles upon rather than courts controversy. He's bringing music to a new crossroads; only time will tell the whole story.

"Not speaking specifically of myself, whether someone is an artist or not, whether their work is of value or not, only time will tell. If the work is of value and means something, it will last for a certain period of time; if not it will disappear and become irrelevant." ●

TIM JARVIS

"The family of musicians can speak a language that can't be spoken by the tongue"

PAUL SIMON'S TRACK-BY-TRACK GUIDE TO *THE RHYTHM OF THE SAINTS*

"THE OBVIOUS CHILD"

"I THOUGHT if anything was going to be a single it would be that. I thought that as soon as we recorded the drums, long before the song existed. The drums had that sound that was vaguely reminiscent of '50s New Orleans music. I just thought it was easier to have a song that was a hit if it had a drum that had a backbeat.

"It's about a variation of me and my generation: '*I'm accustomed to a smoother ride/Maybe I'm a dog that's lost his bite/I don't expect to be treated like a fool no more.*' Maybe life's been soft, maybe I'm not quite... whatever, but I'm not an idiot – so don't bullshit me. On the other hand, '*I don't expect to sleep through the night.*' That's a fact. I wake up in the middle of the night every night. My sleep pattern seems to have an interruption built into it."

"CAN'T RUN BUT"

"The first verse is about Chernobyl. The second verse is about men and women, the third verse is a sort of surrealistic combination of the Amazon and corporate influence on music, MTV and groups packaged for visual appeal as opposed to their ability to play and compose.

"I never intended to put a guitar part on it, it just came about when I was playing blues guitar against the track and thought it was interesting, it would be nice if JJ Cale would play this. I'd been a fan of his for a long time. By coincidence he came into town and he heard it and liked the idea."

"THE COAST"

Dedicated to Derek Walcott, a poet from St Lucia in the West Indies. Did he influence this particular song?

"The entire album was influenced by him really, his sense of place and geography, his use of imagery. I used to read his poetry a lot when I was first constructing the tracks. I often used his words to sing against the tracks when I didn't have any words.

"'The Coast' is really just a little prayer, an invocation. For a long time it was the opening of the album with the constant repeated chants and fragments of prayers. The repetition you hear in prayers... '*If I have money... If I have children...*' The line '*If I have weaknesses don't let them blind me*' is also repeated in the last song on the album.

"It's about musicians from different cultures and different countries playing together on the same album creating a piece of music that has a unique quality. This is something that exists within the family of musicians; they can speak a language that can't be spoken by the tongue."

Simon: not a "religious person", but "curious"

"PROOF"

"The line '*Faith is like an island in the setting sun*' was actually part of another song. I took it out but it fitted into 'Proof'. I'm not sure where it came from. When you're writing it's good if you can get a good opening line, but it doesn't always happen that way, the first verse sometimes becomes the last verse and vice versa."

"FURTHER TO FLY"

"It's about resilience and the strength to go on in the face of adversity."

There's a guy called Ringo Star on guitar.

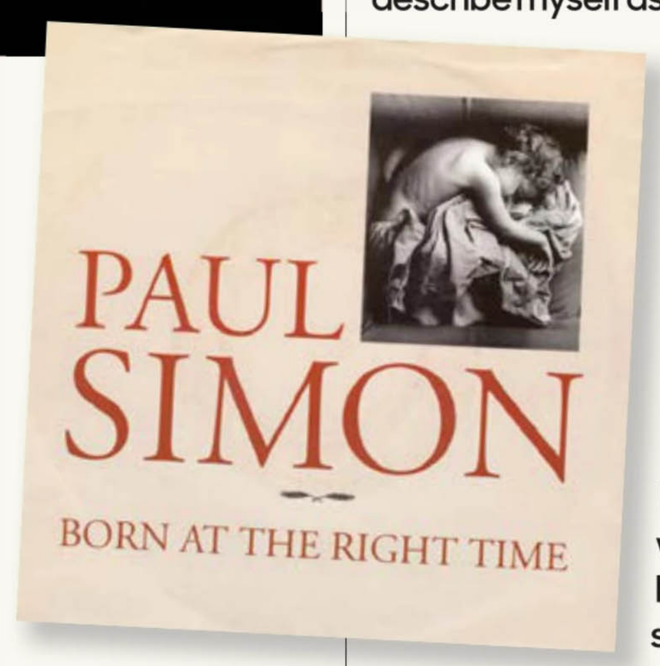
"That's a typographical error: his name is Rego Star, it's got nothing to do with the drummer."

"SHE MOVES ON"

"It's about men's fear of women's anger, being afraid that the woman is really mad at you and that something could happen. There's a threat."

Like several tracks it's recorded in different locations. Does this method present difficulties, do you risk losing momentum in the songs?

"It's a technical problem Roy Halee has to deal with but we've got a lot of experience with it now. As long as the tracks are reasonably well recorded, brought back and transferred onto the digital machine I work on there's no problem."



"BORN AT THE RIGHT TIME"

"A lot of my friends had children this summer. For every child that's born you hope it's the right time."

"THE COOL, COOL RIVER"

"It's in an unusual time signature, 9/8. It's a West African fighting rhythm. If the LP has a location in my mind it's in the southern hemisphere, but this is the only song that's in a specifically urban setting, it's about violence.

"And I was thinking about prayers, what they are. It seems to me that the ancient prayers we repeat in Christianity and Judaism and Moslem religions come from long ago when our relationship to God was much more direct, God was a relevant factor, a physical presence in everyday life. I wouldn't describe myself as a religious person but I would describe myself as curious."

"SPIRIT VOICES"

"It's about a trip I took along the Amazon and a visit to the *bruho*, very roughly a witch doctor. I went out of curiosity. He made up a brew called ayahuasca which is supposed to be hallucinogenic, you're supposed to see the snake of the Amazon, the anaconda, but it didn't happen. It had an effect but it wasn't hallucinogenic, it put your mind in a spacey category. He had many patients there in a little shack in the jungle, people came with their illnesses and he mixed up potions and herbs. We sat there for hours; it wasn't a ceremony, it was just normal office hours, the doctor's surgery."

"THE RHYTHM OF THE SAINTS"

"The title of the LP came very early, it's related to the African Catholic religions."

Why that and not, say, your own religious background?

"Well, Judaism had very little influence on my musical upbringing, which was rock'n'roll. I don't stop and think why I'm curious about something, I just note with relief and delight that I'm curious about something and then go off and pursue it if I can.

"The West African drum and its journey from the Caribbean through Latin America up through to America's Deep South is one of the most fascinating subjects I know." ●

TIM JARVIS

RELEASED: 18 NOVEMBER | **1997**

Songs From The Capeman

Simon's Broadway debut closed after 68 performances, but from the wreckage rises an album too subtle for the stage. BY NIGEL WILLIAMSON

THE headline in the *New York Post* was: "Capeman Slip Slides Away – Broadway's Biggest Flop".

The news that Paul Simon's musical had closed after only 68 performances came as little surprise. Four months earlier, in November 1997, I interviewed the composer backstage at the Marquis Theatre on Broadway during a sneak preview prior to *The Capeman*'s official opening. Behind the professional bravado about his "excitement" over the project and what an "honour" it had been to co-write with the Nobel laureate Derek Walcott, Simon had appeared edgy and nervous. You didn't have to be a mind-reader to deduce that all was not going well.

The most revealing comment Simon made in the course of the interview was his confession that while he found composing in his own troubadour voice came "naturally", writing for the stage had proved to be more challenging and problematic. The songs either had to include dialogue or were required to advance the action in some way, he explained. Neither, he freely admitted, came naturally or easily to him.

In so many ways, Simon's foray into the world of Broadway was a bold one that deserved to succeed. He could have come up with a jukebox musical recycling old hits and called it 'The Sound Of Troubled Water'. Or he might have gone for an autobiographical words-and-music show – as Bruce Springsteen did two decades later with his hugely successful "Springsteen on Broadway" residency. Both would surely have been guaranteed box-office smashes.

To his credit, Simon chose instead to write a show that told a true story of murder, remorse and redemption concerning Salvador Agrón, a Puerto Rican kid who joins a New York street gang and, wearing a black cape, stabbed two white teenagers to death one summer night in 1959. Sentenced to the electric chair at the age of just 16, he found God while on death row and after a campaign for leniency led by the father of one of the victims, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

Simon began work on *The Capeman* in 1988, before he had recorded *The Rhythm Of The Saints*. By the time the project was ready for Broadway and he had brought on board an A-list cast of salsa-singing Latin music superstars, including Ruben Blades and Marc Anthony, he had spent almost a decade perfecting the songs. If the street-gang setting was reminiscent of *West Side Story*, Simon was no slavish imitator. He ambitiously talked about *The Capeman* breaking the mould of the traditional Broadway musical, an artform that he believed had atrophied because it had "never been energised by rock'n'roll."

However, when the show finally opened in 1998, it was an unmitigated disaster. The critics slated it and the *New York Times* likened it to "watching a mortally wounded animal". When the show closed after just eight weeks, the losses – a considerable proportion of which were borne by Simon himself – stood at 11 million dollars, said to be a theatrical record.

Unsurprisingly, the planned release of the soundtrack recording to the biggest turkey in Broadway's history was shelved (although it eventually appeared in 2006, featuring 21 songs performed by the original cast).

However, there is another narrative to *The Capeman* in which something worthwhile was saved from the wreckage. In November 1997, two months before the Broadway opening, Simon released *Songs From The Capeman*, his own studio versions of 13 of the songs from the show.

The disaster surrounding the Broadway production initially sunk Simon's recording, too. *Songs From The Capeman* became

the only album in his solo career to fail to break into the Top 40 of the Billboard chart. Yet listening to it more than 20 years on, it is evident that although *The Capeman* may have been second-rate drama, musically it was high class.

Songs From The Capeman is a fine collection of intimate but potent songs that work as a Paul Simon album for pretty much the same reasons that they failed to click on stage. No wonder they were lost in a cavernous Broadway theatre – because they're not really show tunes at all.

There are no big, bombastic showstoppers of the kind that fill Andrew Lloyd-Webber's musicals and none of the overwrought ballads Elton John wrote for *The Lion King*. Instead we're left with some characteristically smart Simon songs that stand in their own right as intriguing and idiosyncratic examples of his craft as a writer and his subtlety as a performer.

There's satiny gospel doo-wop ("Adios Hermanos"), gorgeous tropical melodies ("I Was Born In Puerto Rico"), folk-rock with a jazzy smooch ("Bernadette"), moody Latin mambo ("The Vampires"), romping 1950s rock pastiche ("Quality"), delicate minor-key acoustic ballads ("Can I Forgive Him"), low-slung blues shuffles ("Killer Wants To Go To College") and early Sun-style rockabilly ("Virgil").

The lyrics are full of literate wordplay, typically cerebral Simon, with added poetic flourishes from Walcott and plenty of profanities that were intended to lend street verisimilitude on stage but sound forced when removed from their theatrical context. Simon is a good idiomatic singer. But "*motherfucker*" (see: "The Vampires") is not a word that sits easily with him.

The Capeman may have been second-rate drama, but musically it was first class

A handful of cast members make guest appearances, notably Marc Anthony on "Satin Summer Nights" and Ruben Blades, who duets with Anthony on "Time Is An Ocean". Yet their contributions seem extraneous. The album would have felt more cohesive if Simon had sung the songs himself. As you listen, you find yourself asking not so much how these songs ever fitted into a stage show but wondering why on earth Simon ever imagined that they could.

Once the Broadway show was up and running, Simon had planned to take *Songs Of The Capeman* on a nationwide concert tour and then perhaps bring it to Europe – but the blowback meant that was abandoned, too.

There have been a couple of attempts to revise the stage production into something more accessible over the years, but sleeping dogs are best left to lie. The album, though, is something else and more than deserves your attention. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Songs From The Capeman

1. Adios Hermanos ★★★★
2. Born in Puerto Rico ★★★★
3. Satin Summer Nights ★★★
4. Bernadette ★★★★
5. The Vampires ★★★★
6. Quality ★★★
7. Can I Forgive Him ★★★★
8. Sunday Afternoon ★★
9. Killer Wants To Go To College ★★★
10. Time Is An Ocean ★★
11. Virgil ★★★
12. Killer Wants To Go To College II ★★
13. Trailways Bus ★★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced by: Roy Halee
Recorded at: Hit Factory, New York City
Personnel incl: Paul Simon (vocals, guitar), Marc Anthony, Ruben Blades, Ednita Nezario (vocals), Steve Cropper (guitar), Tony Garnier (bass), Spanish Harlem Orchestra led by Oscar Hernández
Highest chart position: UK 83; US 42

RELEASED: 03 OCTOBER | **2000**

You're The One

What writer's block? A song-cycle of reflection, politics and cosmic thinking is "dictated" double-quick — a record to swim in. BY PAUL MOODY

FOR a singer-songwriter notorious for agonising over every lyric – this is a man who once released an album including two tracks called "Think Too Much" – Paul Simon's 10th solo album marked a radical new approach. Rather than being the result of countless revisions and redrafts, his first solo album in a decade came as the result of a headlong pursuit of his muse. "On this album, the words came so fast that most of the songs were written in a day or two," he told *The Los Angeles Times* on release. "It's like that old songwriters' cliché: 'I didn't write it. I was just taking dictation.' But that's how it felt. That's very different for me. It's usually, like, a couple of months of working on the lyrics."

This intense burst of creativity resulted in the remarkable 11 tracks of *You're The One*. A 44-minute song cycle full of subtle shifts in tempo and mood, it finds Simon, at 58, dispensing pearls of wisdom relating to life, love and the ageing process over stripped-back arrangements built around guitar, bass and percussion.

More reminiscent of 1973's *There Goes Rhymin' Simon* or 1975's *Still Crazy After All These Years* than the sonic savannahs of *Graceland*, it was the result of a creative reawakening which began in the wake of his previous solo album proper, 1990's *The Rhythm Of The Saints*. Having finished the promotional cycle in style with a huge outdoor show at New York's Central Park, Simon poured his energies into his pet *Capeman* project. That closed on Broadway after just 68 performances, and more humbling still, the soundtrack, *Songs From The Capeman*, saw Simon failing to make the Top 40 in the US for the first time in his solo career.

Returning to his home in Montauk, Long Island, with wife Edie Brickell and their three young children (Adrian, Lulu and Gabriel), Simon spent the summer months licking his wounds and enjoying the contentment of family life before, in autumn 1997, his muse came calling, urging him to capture the otherworldly music he could hear in his head. "The thing about getting older is I really know what I like," Simon told *New York* magazine of this intuitive pursuit of 'the sound'. "And when I find it, I'm in heaven. And that's what I try to do: make a record that is so pleasurable for people who like what I like that they can just swim in it."

Eager to road-test the new material he had demoed with trusted bandmates including Cameroonian guitarist Vincent Nguini, multi-instrumentalist Mark Stewart and drummer Steve Gadd, Simon embarked on his first tour for eight years between June and mid-September 1999, as one half of a superstar tag-team with Bob Dylan. Buoyed by the tour's success, Simon assembled his band at New York's Hit Factory in early 2000 and set to work.

From the opening lines of first track "That's Where I Belong", where Simon declares: *"I'm bound to tell a story, that's where I belong," You're The One* exudes calm and contentment. Rather than looking for some mythical nirvana, Simon is pleased to be wherever the subject of the song is, or, as he admits in the lines: *"The way you turn/And catch me with your eye,"* simply when she's looking in his direction.

Typically, this picture of domestic bliss is immediately turned on its head with a dazzling six-minute "Darling Lorraine". A witty counterpoint to The Knockouts' loved-up 1959 doo-wop hit of the same name, it tells the downbeat tale of a mismatched couple, lightened with flashes of humour, not least in the line: *"All my life, I've been a wanderer/Not really, I rented a room in my parents' place."*

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Paul Simon's ability to write memorable tunes and intriguing lyrics remains undimmed. African guitars and Caribbean rhythms reflect his worldbeat passion, and this includes at least five Simon classics. You can call him what you will, but he's still pop's master craftsman after all these years."
Nigel Williamson, Uncut, November 2000

While "Old" is equally pithy – a simple Buddy Holly-style vamp over which Simon looks back on life experiences any baby-boomer could relate to (*"First time I smoked/Guess what? Paranoid"*) – the songwriter's mischievous nature comes to the fore on the afro-beat-tinged title track, a languid groove where he questions both the lasting nature of love and his own motivation in the lines: *"May 12 angels guard you while you sleep/Maybe that's a waste of angels, I don't know."*

If an allegorical "The Teacher" finds him in deeper musical waters, experimenting with pedal steel guitar and percussive effects over a hypnotic 11/4 rhythm, the lightness of touch returns with a shimmering "Look At That" – a paean to the joys of seeing the world through a child's eyes – before Simon comes back to his cosmological theme with "Señorita With A Necklace Of Tears".

A conversational on the cyclical nature of existence, it's the musical equivalent of a warm bath, Nguini's honey-sweet guitar lines acting as aural balm as Simon concludes: *"I don't want to be a judge, and I don't want to be a jury/I know who I am/Lord knows who I'll be."* While the country honk of "Pigs, Sheep And Wolves" is typically opaque – Simon delivering a dig at social profiling in the guise of a children's nursery rhyme – the songwriter returns to his activist roots on "Hurricane Eye" – where he rails against both environmental and civil rights abuses – before the album's spectacular climax.

"Quiet", companion-piece to "Run That Body Down" from 1972's *Paul Simon*, is a winter hymnal for the ages, the use of a vihuela – a 15th-century Spanish guitar similar to a lute – bestowing it with an Appalachian chill matched by a lyric which finds him looking forward to a more peaceful life: *"I am heading for a place of quiet/Where the sage and sweet grass grow/By a lake of sacred water/From the mountain's melted snow."* Boasting such melodic finery, it's no wonder that on release in October 2000 – a week before Simon's 59th birthday – *You're The One*'s mature, understated songs were received with open arms by a fanbase just as happy to watch the world go by – earning him a Top 20 album in the US and the UK, and a Grammy nomination.

> This is the sound of a restless soul finally happy to be homeward bound

Equally, while Simon's nit-picking nature would eventually get the better of him – revisiting four of the album's tracks ("The Teacher", "Pigs, Sheep And Wolves", "Love", "Darling Lorraine") on 2018's *In The Blue Light* – it also indicated how much *You're The One* meant to him – the sound of a restless soul finally happy to be homeward bound. ●

SLEEVENOTES | You're The One

1. That's Where I Belong ★★★
2. Darling Lorraine ★★★★
3. Old ★★★
4. You're The One ★★★
5. The Teacher ★★★
6. Look At That ★★★
7. Señorita With A Necklace Of Tears ★★★★
8. Love ★★★
9. Pigs, Sheep & Wolves ★★
10. Hurricane Eye ★★★
11. Quiet ★★★★

Produced by: Paul Simon
Recorded at: The Hit Factory, New York City
Personnel includes: Paul Simon (vocals, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, sitar), Vincent Nguini (acoustic and electric guitar), Steve Gadd (drums), Jeremy Hadda (percussion), Peter Herbert (bass guitar), Larry Campbell (pedal steel guitar), Howard Levy (harmonica), Steve Gorn (bamboo flute), Evan Ziporyn (clarinet, soprano saxophone)
Highest chart position: UK 20; US 19

RELEASED: 09 MAY | **2006**

Surprise

The sounds of science. Simon enlists Eno for an electronica-infused look at America in the wake of 9/11. BY JASON ANDERSON

IN terms of their respective approaches to making music, Paul Simon and Brian Eno couldn't appear any less compatible. While the former is a careful craftsman with a mile-wide perfectionist streak, the other pushes for more spontaneous strategies whether working for his many famous clients or for himself. So it was no surprise that the project that became *Surprise* nearly ran aground on the first day Simon and Eno convened in Eno's London studio in 2003, not long after the two met at a dinner party.

As Eno later explained to *The Guardian*, things did not begin promisingly as Simon spent forever tinkering with a guitar overdub on a drum track. Says Eno, "It was like going into a field with someone who wants to build a house there, and all they've got is a single brick in their hand, and they keep moving the brick around and saying, 'What do you think?' You have no picture of what the house is, so you can't make any useful comment."

Realising he had to change up the situation, Eno sent Simon out shopping while he tried something else. By the time Simon returned, there was a new idea that pleased them both and their unlikely construction project resumed.

Despite the rapport the duo developed, any house they made was bound to have an unusual shape. In that respect, the result did not disappoint. Released in 2006 with Simon listed as producer and Eno credited for the "sonic landscape", *Surprise* is the most unpredictable, uncharacteristic and sometimes confounding work in Simon's career. Dubious critics were quick to tag Simon's belated embrace of electronics as a faintly desperate move by a geezer trying to get hip to the times, like Paul McCartney's foray as The Fireman or David Bowie discovering drum'n'bass. Yet the best songs here – be it the nervy likes of "Outrageous" and "Beautiful" or the more open-hearted "Father And Daughter" – feel as uncontrived and as deeply personal as anything he recorded. That fact becomes vividly clear once it's not so jarring to hear familiar song forms being pulled into new shapes and refitted with clattering rhythms, wispy clouds of synths, distorted guitars, dub-wise textures and more elements that smack of Eno's involvement.

What's more, *Surprise*'s hazy, fragmentary nature and lack of overall cohesion seem less like liabilities born of some fundamental incompatibility between its creators. Instead, they contribute to a starkly honest reflection of Simon's headspace in the first years of the new century, a time that was deeply disorienting for a whole lot of people besides himself.

One reason was a very big one. The events of 9/11 had a major impact on a musician with such a long and close association with New York. As he later said in an interview with National Public Radio, the challenge of having to "think about just what it was I wanted to say in a world that was permanently altered" made his process even more arduous than usual. Compounding that was the question of what kind of place there was for a man over 60 in a 21st-century pop marketplace besides as a boomer nostalgia act (which is not to say he wasn't up for another lucrative Simon & Garfunkel tour in 2003).

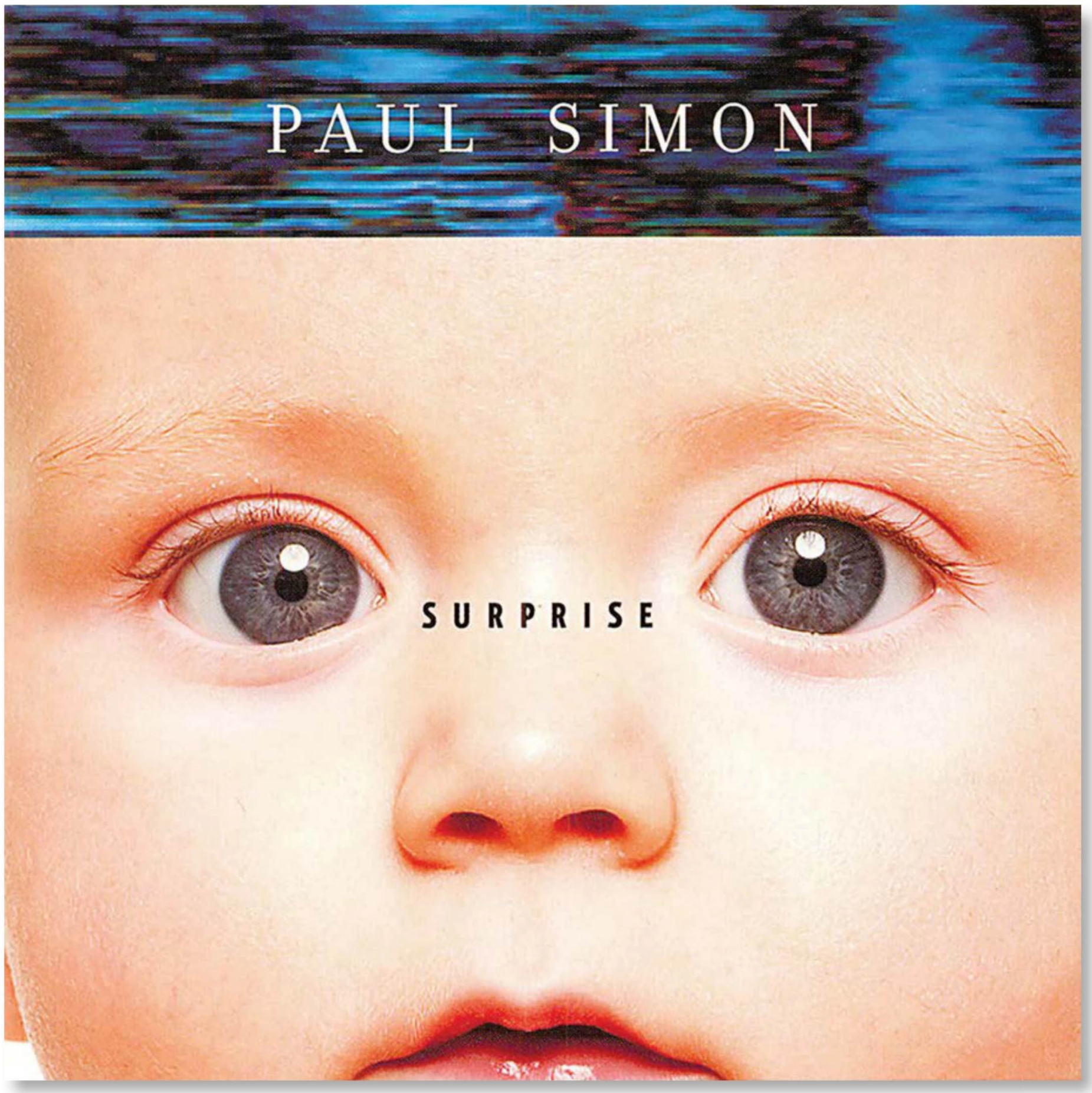
By the time he met Eno, Simon was up for any approach that might help him break through the latest impasse. After that first round of bricklaying, they continued to meet up to rework and augment the recordings Simon made back in the US with a cast of musicians that included longtime favourites like drummer Steve Gadd and special guests such as Bill Frisell and Herbie Hancock.

The results contain a huge variety of sounds and ideas, sometimes too much. But at other times, this kind of overly busy conflagration is exactly what the song needs, no more so than in *Surprise*'s opener "How Can You Live In The Northeast?" Here, Eno's constantly shifting sonic landscape perfectly suits lyrics that ponder the religious and cultural divisions in American society that were laid bare by 9/11 and seem even wider now. ("*If the answer is infinite light*," Simon wonders, "*why do we sleep in the dark?*") Shaped around a delicate Frisell figure that competes for dominance with a Radiohead-like rhythm, "Everything About It Is A Love Song" sees Simon interweave his various personal and political concerns before sagely concluding, "*We don't mean to mess things up/But mess them up we do*."

The abundance of new elements may obscure another of *Surprise*'s strengths, which is the renewed sharpness of his wit after his more earnest efforts for *...The Capeman* and the relative mushiness of *You're The One*. A buoyant pop song with aspects of the squelchy funk that Eno devised with Talking Heads,

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"Eno's influence is obvious all over *Surprise*, in the swampy textures and echoing, ambient tones, which give the 11 songs a soundwash not associated with Simon... A comeback of unexpected maturity and power."
Nigel Williamson, Uncut, June, 2006



"Outrageous" mocks its narrator's cantankerous attitude to all signs of modernity by revealing the age-induced anxiety behind his pique: "*Who's going to love you when your looks are gone?*" he frets. Simon's zingers in "Sure Don't Feel Like Love" are pretty funny too – "*I remember once in August 1993 I was wrong,*" goes the best one, "*and I could be wrong again.*" But with its pile-up of details and zig-zag rhythm, the song feels too quirky and fussy. An expression of his hopes for peace in a renewed era of conflict, "Wartime Prayers" is similarly overdressed to the point where it resembles one of U2's Eno-enhanced stadium ballads, complete with superfluous gospel choir.

"Beautiful" and "I Don't Believe" are more satisfying, possibly because Simon's guitar parts are given greater prominence than they get in *Surprise*'s most cluttered passages. There's even a sturdy melody straight out of a '50s country song in "Another Galaxy", one of several tracks in the album's latter half that present characters coping with past regrets. Like the bride who flees her wedding day in "Another Galaxy", the working stiff in "Once Upon A Time There Was An Ocean" feels both trapped by old decisions and disconnected from the world that surrounds him, a place where "*nothing is different but everything is changed*".

The burbles and rumbles in Eno's landscape accentuate the feeling of dislocation in "That's Me" as well. "*The future is beauty and sorrow,*" he sings over a backing of herky-jerky electro-blues. "*Still, I wish that we could run away and live the life we used to, if just for tonight and tomorrow.*"

He finds a more substantial sort of refuge in *Surprise*'s closer. Initially recorded for the 2002 kids flick *The Wild Thornberrys Movie* and lightly reworked by Eno, "Father And Daughter" is an endearing folk-pop charmer that brims with all the love a parent can feel for a child. "*And though I can't guarantee there's nothing scary hiding under your bed,*" he croons to his daughter Lulu (son Adrian can be heard elsewhere singing along). "*I'm gonna stand guard like a postcard of a golden retriever/And never leave 'til I leave you with a sweet dream in your head.*"

Unabashedly sentimental, it's out of step with the darker, bleaker themes that course through the rest of the album. But it's also the sound of Simon escaping his worries and fully appreciating his ability to cherish and protect the people he can, which is no small thing. And by ending an often troubled and troubling album on a note of pure sweetness, "Father And Daughter" allows Simon and Eno to finish off their job with a perfectly placed final brick. ●

> Its haziness and lack of cohesion contribute to an honest reflection of Simon's headspace

SLEEVENOTES | Surprise

1. How Can You Live In The Northeast? ★★★★
2. Everything About It Is A Love Song ★★★
3. Outrageous ★★★★
4. Sure Don't Feel Like Love ★★
5. Wartime Prayers ★★
6. Beautiful ★★★
7. I Don't Believe ★★★
8. Another Galaxy ★★★★
9. Once Upon A Time There Was An Ocean ★★★
10. That's Me ★★★
11. Father And Daughter ★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced by: Paul Simon
Recorded at: Capitol Studios, LA; Landsdowne Studios, London; Ocean Way, Nashville; Clinton Studios, Right Track Studios, Sony Studios and Hit Factory, NYC
Personnel incl: Paul Simon (acoustic gtr, electric gtr, vocals), Brian Eno (electronics), Alex Al, Abraham Laboriel Snr, Pino Palladino (bass gtr), Andy Smith (programming), Vincent Nguini (acous gtr), Bill Frisell (elec gtr), Robin Dimaggio, Steve Gadd (drums), Herbie Hancock (piano), Gil Goldstein (keys)
Highest chart position: UK 4; US 14

RELEASED: (US) 08 April, (UK) 11 APRIL | 2011

So Beautiful Or So What

Free from labels and homeward bound, the artist returns to the six-string to forge a late-career landmark that finds space for everyday anxieties, God, wildebeest and Jay-Z. **BY BUD SCOPPA**

FOLLOWING his sonic exploration with Eno, and fresh out of his longtime deal with Warners, Paul Simon decided to switch things up. Since *Graceland* a quarter of a century earlier, his creative process had involved writing over predetermined grooves, but now he felt the desire to return to his roots. This urge was triggered by the sheer joy he'd felt during the overdub sessions for *Surprise* after coming up with a "series of nice chord changes" for the bridge of "Everything About It Is A Love Song", and he craved more of that feeling. So Simon repaired to the studio in a cottage adjacent to his house in leafy, affluent New Canaan, Connecticut, with no particular preconceived ideas, acoustic in his lap, and set forth to craft some songs from scratch. As his fingers danced over the fretboard, his imagination was unleashed. And that became the starting point of what would be his 12th studio album.

Simon called on longtime studio collaborator Phil Ramone, who lived nearby, to co-produce a self-financed album that would be more than a year in the making. As engineer Andy Smith, another regular, recalled, "Paul would usually start out by making a click track using a percussion instrument or tapping out a rhythm on his guitar, then he'd play a guitar part he'd already written and build the song from there. Usually, the next step would be to overdub more guitars and percussion. I think it would surprise some people how complete some of the tracks sounded before any other musicians were added."

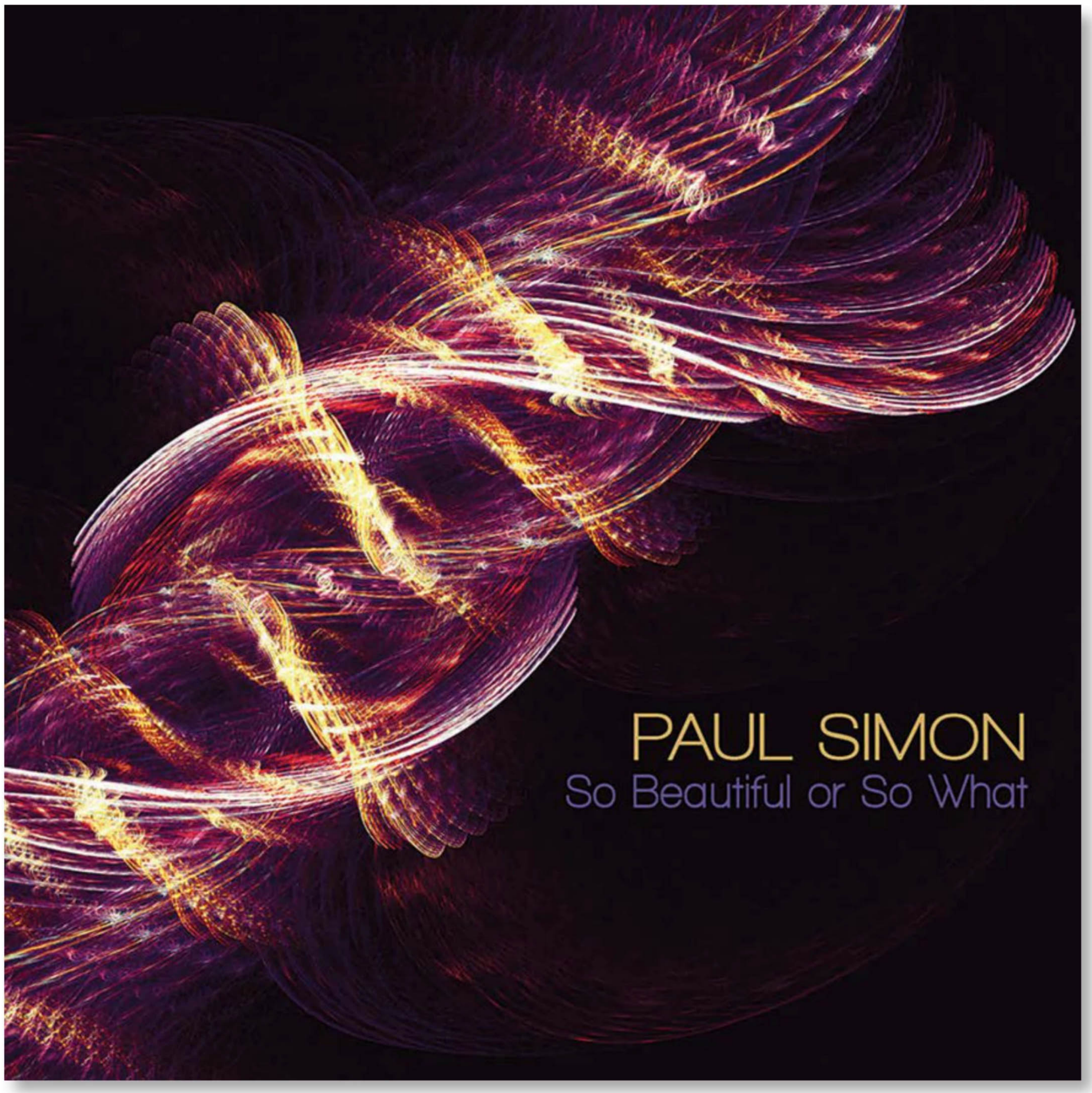
Drummer/multi-instrumentalist Jim Oblon and guitarist Vincent Nguini, both regulars as well, were summoned to play their conventional roles; otherwise, Simon opted for specialists from all over the map. They included Indian percussionists juxtaposed with bluegrass group Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver on the gorgeous romantic ballad "Dazzling Blue", Malian Yacouba Sissoko playing kora on the sardonic "Rewrite", and percussionist Steve Shehan, working in his Paris studio, adding polyrhythmic accents to three tracks. Simon also made use of samples for the first time, flying in a Sonny Terry harmonica solo on "Love Is The Eternal Sacred Light" and a 1938 recording of the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet on "Love & Blessings". But the unifying musical element of *So Beautiful...* is Simon's own playing on a variety of electric and acoustic guitars on an LP as virtuosic as any in his huge discog. And no matter how intricate the track, those guitars are surrounded by space – there's no conventional electric bass filling the low end – and the attuned listener can hear the room in which they were recorded.

"Getting Ready For Christmas Day", the thematic set-up track on an album of cosmological ruminations populated by celestial figures, encompasses the joys and sorrows that accompany the greatest of American holidays. In the first-person narrative, the harried protagonist wrestles with money matters, worries about a nephew on his third tour of duty in Iraq, and wishes he could tell his late mom and dad that they did a good job raising their kids. Interposed with this internal dialogue is a sample of a 1941 sermon from the Reverend JM Gates, an Atlanta preacher committed to shaking the members of his congregation to their souls. As they're getting ready for Christmas Day, he points out, *"the undertaker, he's getting ready for your body"*, and so are *"the jailer, the lawyer and the police force"*. No comfort there. At the same time, the music – laced with skittering guitars, stomping feet and the sampled hissing of a steam train – positively bustles, evoking images of shoppers trudging along snow-covered city sidewalks, their arms laden with gifts, as Simon brings together the emotional extremes of the season.

As the characters Simon has dreamed up work their way

CRITICS' VERDICTS

"From the opening 'Getting Ready For Christmas Day' to the valedictory title track, this sounds like classic Paul Simon. The voice is upfront, the melodies adhesive, and there is a real sense that the singer's writing has clicked into focus. Here he's telling stories, throwing narrative shapes, and twisting his songs into the service of a bigger idea. Almost every song is preoccupied somehow by God."
Alastair McKay, Uncut, May, 2011



through life's vicissitudes, a trickster God plays an endless game of now you see Him, now you don't, throwing off alternating visions of eternal life and encroaching darkness. When the protagonist of "The Afterlife" arrives at the Pearly Gates, he's given a form to fill out. "Love And Hard Times" begins with God and His Son making a visit to earth, but the Lord soon determines they've got far more important things to do than hang around this troubled planet – *"Anyway, these people are slobs here"*. Whereupon the viewpoint shifts to that of a couple seeing beauty everywhere as they find earthly salvation together, the guy telling his girl, *"Thank God I found you in time"*, amid heart-tugging strings evoking a 1940s movie score. On "Questions For The Angels", hope persists through the hardest of times for *"fools and pilgrims all over the world"*, including one pilgrim who's observed traversing downtown Brooklyn past a billboard showing Jay-Z advertising a clothing line.

While the lyrics investigate the metaphysical from ground level, the resolutely rhythmic music maintains a lithe physicality, pulsing with life. Simon and his revolving cast whip up springy, slinky settings over which his voice glides with apparent effortlessness, while the unexpected sonic combinations come off as seamlessly natural. They're also obsessive, exemplified by the guitar lick on "Rewrite", each repetition punctuated by the moan of a wildebeest recorded during a family vacation in Africa. On "Love Is Eternal Sacred Light", a signature Simon rocker in the "Graceland" mode, he shreds away on multitracked electrics while Oblon's kick drum and drop-D-tuned guitar set the thumping groove. A reverb-drenched blues-guitar riff powers the similarly visceral title track, as Simon bemoans the way humans blindly *"play a game with time and love/Like a pair of rolling dice"*.

> The sound and subject matter make the listener feel more fully attached to the world

As always, Simon's elliptical yet expressive lyrics are a manifestation of his internal dialogue, which is no different from what's going through the minds of so many others – thoughts of children, ageing, work, war, anxiety, love, faith, death – rendering them not simply relatable but universal. From start to finish, the album is an extraordinary expression of the preciousness of life, on an album brimming with poignancy and power, as this master of song captures the tears and laughter, ironies and contradictions of contemporary existence. Both the sound and the subject matter reverberate in a way that causes the listener to feel more fully attached to the world. This is Simon's greatest gift, expressed here in its purest form. ●

SLEEVENOTES | So Beautiful Or So What

1. Getting Ready For Christmas Day ★★★★
2. The Afterlife ★★★★
3. Dazzling Blue ★★★★★
4. Rewrite ★★★★
5. Love And Hard Times ★★★★★
6. Love Is Eternal Sacred Light ★★★★★
7. Amulet ★★★★
8. Questions For The Angels ★★★★★
9. Love And Blessings ★★★★
10. So Beautiful Or So What ★★★★★

Label: Hear Music/Concord
Recorded at: Simon's cottage (New Canaan, Ct); Simon's summer home (Montauk, NY), Power Station, Clinton Recording, Bennett Studios and Germano Studios (NY)
Produced by: Phil Ramone and Paul Simon

Personnel includes: Paul Simon (vocals, guitars, perc, glockenspiel), Jim Oblon (drums, perc, elec guitar, slide guitar, bass), Steve Shehan (perc, bass, djembe, glass harp, resonator), Skip La Plante (gong, harp, wind chimes), Vincent Nguini (guitars), Doyle Lawson And Quicksilver (bk vocals)
Highest chart position: UK 6; US 4

"If you don't die or fade away, you become legendary..."

Snubbed by Dylan and writing on kid time, **SIMON** reverts back to melody for *So Beautiful Or So What*, inspired in part by Dr King and Jay-Z. A bona fide "artist" now, his legend has cohered around his "restrictive" fame and "liberating" failures. In DC he guides ALLAN JONES through the lows (cinematic disasters, "rock'n'roll indulgences") and highs (*Graceland*, Jamaican dope). "I'm amazed it's gone on for so long," he says, "but being a legend doesn't mean anything other than that you're old"

MARK SELIGER

"Either you think life is an incredible gift or it's no big deal": Simon on the title of his 12th solo LP, *So Beautiful Or So What*, 2011

YOU think of the people who wrote the soundtrack for the 1960s, those days of miracle and wonder, your youth, and here's one of them, opening the door of his hotel room, Paul Simon.

"Welcome," he says, a dapper dude, grey around the edges at 69, but otherwise trim and hale. He's looking good, is your first impression, as he leads you into his suite at the Four Seasons hotel in Washington DC. The day outside is bright but bitterly cold, a raw wind coming off the Potomac, snow on the way. He looks dressed for the weather in a thick blue woollen top, zipped to the throat, good jeans and the kind of boots he might wear for a bracing walk in the woods near his home in New Canaan, Connecticut.

He's in Washington for a gala concert tonight to commemorate the 50th anniversary of John F Kennedy's presidential inauguration, which he'll close with a version of "The Sound Of Silence", written only a few months after Kennedy's assassination in November 1963. It was Simon & Garfunkel's first US No 1 and is a reminder to those of us of a certain age of a time when Simon as much as Dylan, The Beatles, whoever, was redefining the art of popular songwriting.

Uncut, meanwhile, is in town to talk to Simon about his new album, his first since *Surprise*, a 2006 collaboration with Brian Eno, and the 11th of a solo career that began when Simon & Garfunkel, friends from a shared New York childhood, split in 1970 at the peak of their popularity, with *Bridge Over Troubled Water* on its way to becoming one of the biggest-selling albums ever.

So Beautiful Or So What is a stripped-down late-career classic, a mordant meditation on love, mortality, several kinds of contemporary woe and not much less than the meaning of life on songs like "Questions For The Angels", "The Afterlife" and the title track. Musically, it reminds him of his first solo album, *Paul Simon*, though there are powerful echoes too of *Still Crazy After All These Years* and *Graceland*.

"Without having intended it to be," he says, "the album became something of a recapitulation of the whole trip that I've been on, my whole career."

Which, as well as the new album, is what we now talk about. He sits with his back to the afternoon light coming through the window. By the time we're through, nearly three hours hence, there won't be much of it left.

***UNCUT*: Do you really think *So Beautiful Or So What* is your best record for 20 years?**
PAUL SIMON: I didn't say that. That's what someone else said. I don't really have a clear idea of where it stands in relation to what I've done before. That's the truth. I'm generally enthusiastic when I'm working and when I immediately finish I'm enthusiastic. Shortly after that I don't want to hear it.

Why don't you want to hear what you've done? It's always been my way. It's such an intense process for me and the process itself can take so long, and I get into it so completely, that by the time I've finished a piece of work I'm really finished with it. I'm done. What happens then is I don't do anything for usually a year or so. It's an awkward, not particularly comfortable period where you think you have no thoughts, no ideas, and that's when I usually start to think that I'll never make another record.

And then that period passes and there might be a song on the last album that I particularly liked, or something about it that especially appealed to me. And that's when I might start again.

With this album, it was a song on *Surprise*, "Everything About It Is A Love Song". It had different harmonic changes, not typical, in this particular section that I really enjoyed. And it really made me think about harmony as opposed to rhythm, which is the way I've been doing albums for 25 years, ever since *Graceland*. This time, I thought I really should go and do a thing that I've been avoiding, which is to go and sit in a room with my guitar and write a song. Which is, of course, the way I used to do it.

And that's how I began this album. The first three things that I wrote were "Amulet", that little guitar piece, "Love In Hard Times", then "Questions For The Angels". So the album began with three ballads, just me and guitar. And that's how they were recorded.

Between albums, are you thinking about music, working on ideas, new songs? No. I get back into the family, normal life. A year or so later, I say, "I wonder if I'll make any more albums?" Everyone I know says, "Of course you will. You always say that and you always do." But I always think that, as there's no guarantee you'll ever have an idea for a new song.

I never assume that it's going to continue indefinitely. In fact, I'm kind of amazed that it has gone on for so long. I was 13 or 14 when I started to write songs. For whatever reasons, though, I have this self-doubt. I think Philip Larkin probably poisoned my mind. I really like his poetry, but I don't want to read it too much because it takes me to a dark place. But he stopped writing and people asked him why and he just said, "The muse deserted me."

So I've never presumed that I will always be able

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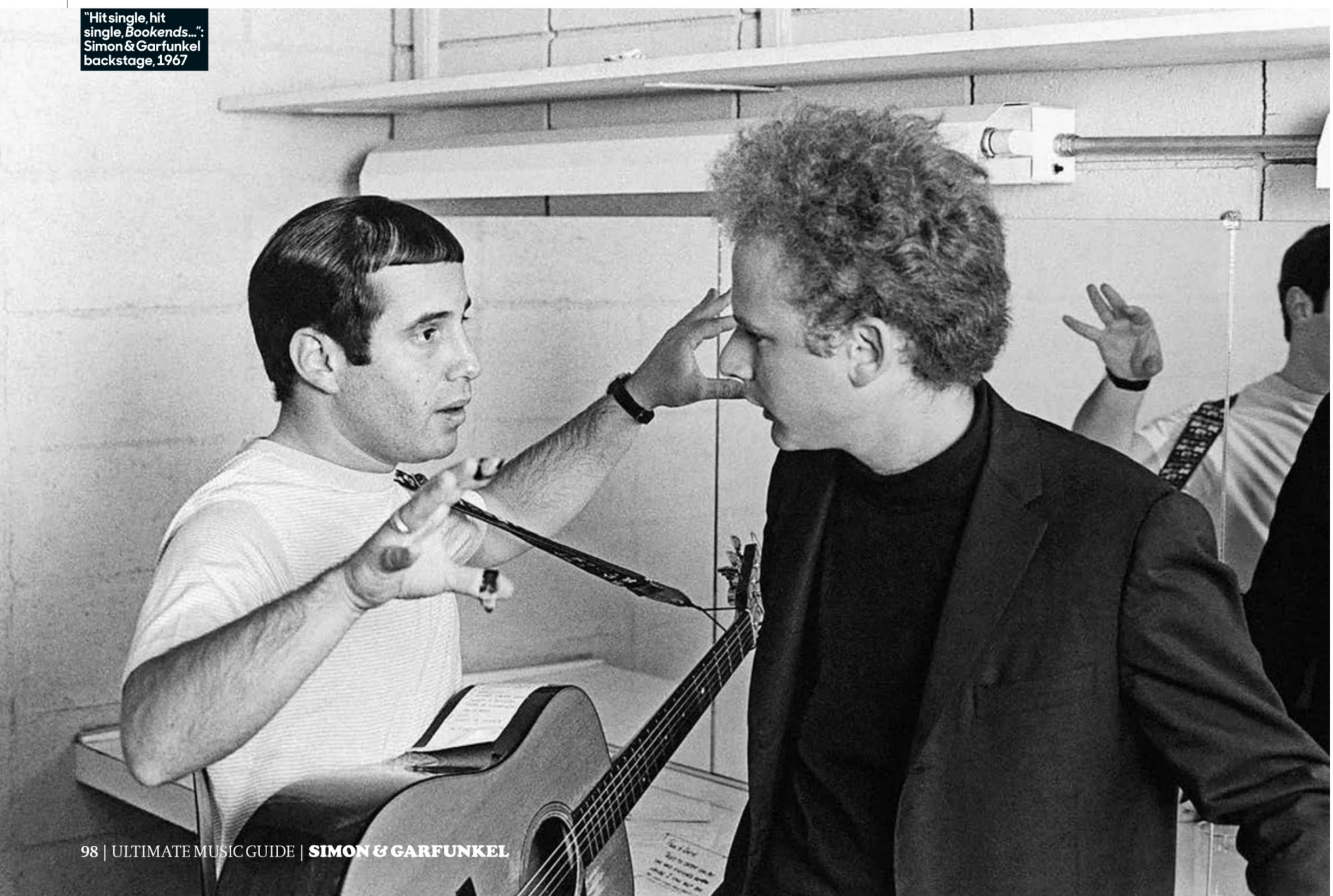


"Hit single, hit single, *Bookends*...": Simon & Garfunkel backstage, 1967

Plod-like: Simon encounters the short arm of the law in London, mid-'60s

to write, that there'll always be things I want to write about, unless you just repeat yourself. Some people like to do the same thing every time. I don't, simple as that. So don't ask me, don't expect it from me.

It sounds to the non-songwriter that in building up songs from beats and rhythms, you in some way work backwards. I think a lot of people imagine a songwriter coming up with the words first and then setting them to an appropriate tune...
That may be the way it works for most songwriters, or a lot of them. They sit and they play and they come up with an idea and they write a song. And the song may come in a day, if you're lucky, or a couple of days, or a week, which is still pretty fast. I was never fast, even when I was younger, when I wrote much faster than I do now. I was never prolific. But it's not unheard of, the way I do it. I think the Stones have always done it that way.

I started to build the albums around rhythms in response to my frustration with the album that preceded *Graceland*, which was *Hearts And Bones*. I felt with that album that I had written some songs that were better than the tracks that went on the album. I couldn't get things to fit together, so I ended up changing the songs to fit the tracks and then I thought, 'My demo was better than this.'

So with *Graceland* I thought I'll just make tracks that I really like and then I'll write the songs, the words, and if I don't like what they sound like set to the music I'll throw things out and start again, which on a couple of occasions I did. "Boy In The Bubble", notably. I wrote a whole song and didn't like it and threw it all out. The words weren't bad, but I liked the track more. So I kept one and tossed the other and started again. That's not a decision you take lightly, because after you put in a lot of time on something you can fool yourself that it's good. But eventually, it has to go. You throw it out. You say, "Too bad." And it's gone. It has to be gone. If you leave it, you're done for.

So you've got your three or four songs as the basis for the album, there's a shape emerging. Do you then have any kind of routine that follows to finish off the songs you need to fill an album? Do you have a room you go to, a certain time of day that's good for writing? I like to write in the car, taking the kids to school, picking them up. Driving from where I live in Connecticut to the city, which is a 40- to 50-minute drive. I like to do that more than I like going into my little studio and playing and sitting in a chair. But I'll do that, too. And I'd rather do it in the morning. I don't work late at night. The house is run on kids' time, so everybody goes to sleep early.

When you were younger, did you stick more to a routine, set yourself targets of a song a day or a song a week? In the very early days, when I was living in England and playing in the folk clubs, I wrote regularly. I'd sit down and write a song, then another one. I was 21 or 22 – I was just amazed that I'd been able to start a song and finish it.

When Simon & Garfunkel became a hit group, I didn't have anything else to do but work on Simon & Garfunkel songs. I wasn't married. I didn't have a family. We loved to be in the studio, just like most kids our age in bands. I would write pretty regularly and I would show the songs to Artie and he would be enthusiastic or maybe not, but usually enthusiastic. So that stimulated the whole process and things came a little more quickly.

> **"When I was really young, I didn't know when I'd written a bad song"**
> *Paul Simon*

But once I had children and had to accept other aspects of a more scheduled life, things slowed down. At a certain point, I didn't want to write a bad song. When I was really young, I didn't know when I'd written a bad song. Those are the songs that fall into the category of juvenilia; you didn't know any better and it was pretentious. But you're supposed to be pretentious at 22. It's better than being pretentious at 42. That's unforgiveable.

What gave you the confidence to start writing your own songs? It wasn't a question of confidence. It was instinct. I started writing when I was 12 or 13. You don't need any confidence at that age. You just do it. My father gave me a guitar, taught me a couple of chords and I began to write songs. Back then, they came really fast. When you're 13, 14 or 15, you look in the mirror and you think you look great, that whatever you say is smart. It was the same with the songs. "Look, I wrote this song. How great am I?"

Are there a lot of songs that never made it as far as a record? Very few. I usually wrote – what – 11 songs for an album? Then I stopped. I never wrote 15 songs and threw out four. I was usually so relieved to have written the 11th song that I was happy to stop there.

The Simon & Garfunkel career arc goes hit single, hit single, *Bookends*, which was a hit album. And the next album after *Bookends*, forgetting *The Graduate* soundtrack that occurred in between, is *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, which really is one of those rare albums that doesn't have a weakness...

At that point, that was when we broke up, and I started again. But I knew I'd never make another *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. I needed to get away from that sound, which was enormous. I wanted to do something smaller, an album about rhythm. So the next album [*Simon's second solo album, from 1972*] began with "Mother And Child Reunion" and me going down to Jamaica to record with the band that had backed up Jimmy Cliff on "Vietnam", a song I loved from *Wonderful World, Beautiful People*.

RB/REDFERNS

"It was fun for me, yeah": on tour with Bob Dylan at the McNichols Arena in Denver, Colorado, June 7, 1999

I called up this guy, Leslie Kong. He was given the producer credit on that album. In a way, it was the first time I acted upon an instinct which I'd always had – I like what people call world music. "Why Don't You Write Me?" on *Bridge Over Troubled Water* was an attempt at doing a ska thing, but we couldn't get it right. I thought it's no good asking musicians in LA to play as if they lived in Kingston. It's like asking somebody to write in somebody else's handwriting. So you go to LA, you let them play what they're good at. You want the sound of Kingston, Jamaica, you go to Kingston, Jamaica.

What was it like when you went down there? It was hilarious, an amazing time. First of all, I made the deal with the record producer to pay the guys double scale, twice what you'd pay someone for a session in New York. This seemed fair. What I didn't know was that they usually got paid $10 a song. So I came in and we were going to be there for three days and they asked me how many songs we were going to do. And I said, "I just have this one." You should have seen their reaction. Depression spread through the room like a plague. I couldn't figure out what had gotten into them. Pretty soon, they're all enveloped in a cloud of smoke and nobody looks very happy. I soon figured out they all thought they were getting $10 a tune and since I only had the one tune that wasn't going to add up to much. When I explained I was paying by the hour on double scale for three days, however many songs we did, the mood picked up noticeably.

Did you get high with the guys? Oh, sure. You didn't have much choice. There was so much smoke you'd have got a contact high just walking into a room.

The new record reunites you with Phil Ramone, after collaborating with Brian Eno on 2006's *Surprise*. Did you want to put yourself in more familiar hands this time? Well, Phil Ramone lives about 15 minutes away from me in Connecticut. I saw him somewhere, and he said we should do something together, and it seemed like a really good idea. Because I work so slowly, when I worked with Brian I think altogether I made four trips to London and he made one to New York. With the new album, I had the luxury of recording at home. I could go in each day and take that out and put this in or change this here, drop that, add this. The kind of stuff that you can't do in the studio without driving people crazy.

"I like to listen to Dylan, to find out what's on his mind or what he's hiding"
Paul Simon

Did you want Dylan to appear on the album? Yes. I thought Bob could sing, put a nice voice on the verse from "So Beautiful Or So What" that begins, "*Ain't it strange the way we're ignorant/ How we seek out bad advice*". I thought it would be nice if he sang that, since his voice has become so weathered I thought he would sound like a sage. I sent it to him, but I didn't hear back. I don't know why.

You toured with Dylan in 1999. Did you have fun with him? It was fun for me, yeah. He's fun to be with.

Do you discuss songwriting with someone like him? No. I never have had a really serious discussion about songwriting with any of those guys I know. I've talked very little about songwriting with Paul McCartney. I've never talked about it with Bob Dylan. I think that my tendency to think about things and to find out a comfortable way to work is not typical of everybody. Some people like going by their instincts. They don't want to overthink anything, because it takes them somewhere they don't like. They like doing things quickly, just to see what they come up with in circumstances where they're led purely by instinct. But I don't like what I come up with when I do that. That's not the way my brain works. It's very different, I imagine, to the way Neil Young works.

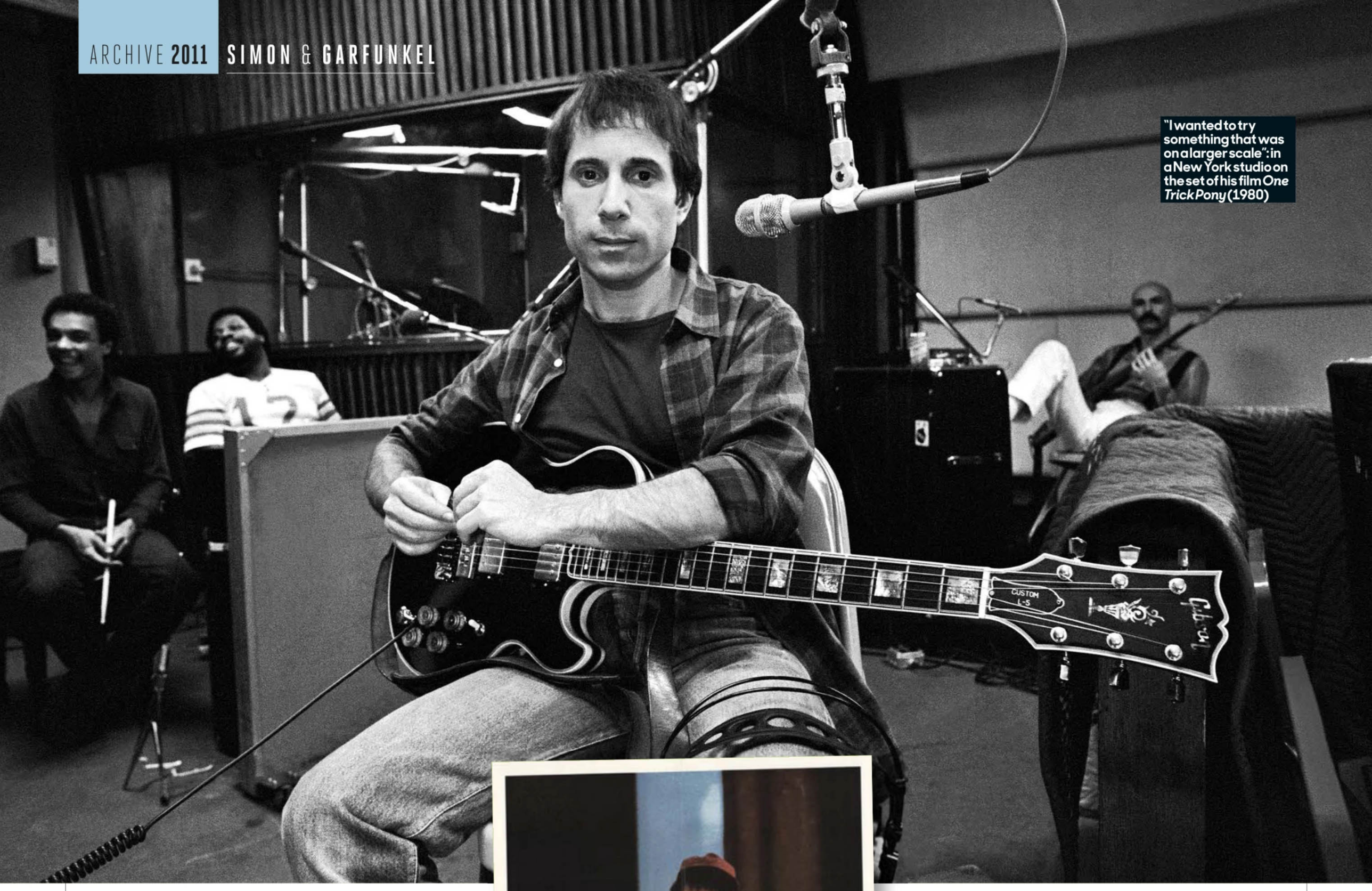
When you were touring with Dylan and playing with him, how did you cope with what we've come to recognise as his 'unpredictability' as a performer? We just made bad music. It was simple as that.

Do you listen to the new albums as they come out by your '60s peers? Oh, yeah. Yeah. I thought *Love And Theft* was an interesting album. I like to listen to Dylan, to find out what's on his mind or what he's hiding. But I don't analyse what those guys are doing so much as listen to them to see what they're up to. I listened to Neil's album, *Le Noise*. I didn't enjoy it as much as other stuff of Neil's. You know a songwriter I like a lot – I don't think this will be a surprise to you – and who has a lot of similarities to me, is Randy Newman.

There are a couple of tracks on the new album, actually, whose sardonic bleakness reminded me of him. Well, Randy Newman doesn't have the copyright on sardonic

LARRY HULST/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

"Randy Newman doesn't have the copyright on sardonic bleakness": in 2011, releasing *So Beautiful Or So What*



"I wanted to try something that was on a larger scale": in a New York studio on the set of his film *One Trick Pony* (1980)

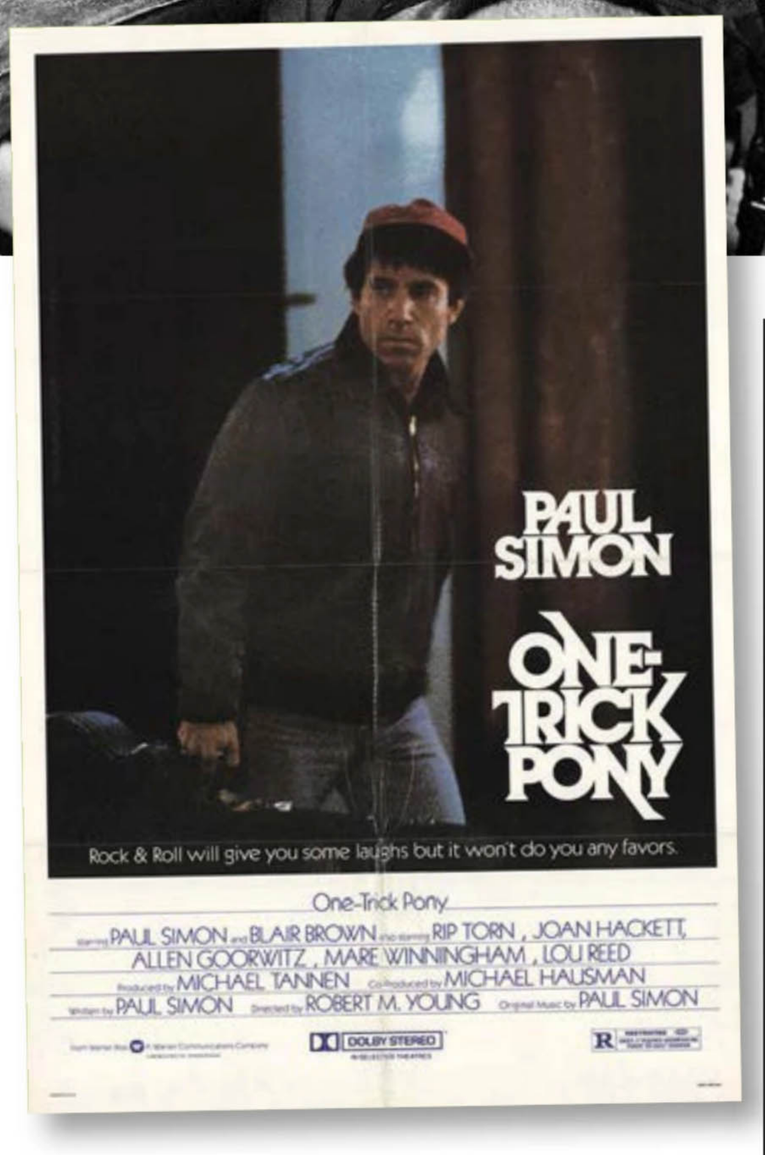
bleakness. I've been there before. But I do like that in him and he is the funniest of those writers. His songwriting is also very compositional. And when he gets emotional it's particularly emotional because he's so intelligent and cynical.

What was the extent of your ambition when you started writing songs? Would you have been happy just making a living as a songwriter or did you have a larger ambition to leave your mark on the times? When I started, I just wanted to have a record on the radio. Artie and I were thrilled when the little song we made when we were like, 15, became kind of a hit. That's really all I thought about. I just wanted that to go on. I wasn't thinking about how you made a hit record, they were just coming naturally. It all seemed so easy. You made an album, you wrote 10 or 11 songs, and three of them were hit singles.

At some point, obviously, your ambition matured... I wouldn't really describe it as my ambition. What happened was I started to become a better writer. From *Bookends* on there aren't too many really bad songs. There's a whole bunch of songs that are forgettable, but there aren't too many real stinkers.

But I wasn't thinking about making a mark. I never thought of myself as an artist until I was in my forties. That was the first time I said, "I am an artist. That doesn't mean I'm a good artist. It just means I have a certain personality. I keep making up things." That seemed to me what an artist did.

Was that a sudden thought or did it creep up on you a bit? I was always uncomfortable with being called a poet or an artist, whatever. I was real uncomfortable with that.



Why? Well, I didn't grow up in an artistic environment. My father was a working musician. My parents grew up during the Depression, in the '30s. So things were harsh. It was all about surviving, having a job and taking care of the family. He didn't want me to be a professional musician. He didn't think it was a good idea. And there was nobody in my neighbourhood that was an artist.

But by the time I was in my forties, I realised that being called an artist didn't mean that you were a good artist or a great artist. It just meant that you made your living out of creating. And that's what I'd been doing all my life. At that point, I began to understand that I had a certain place in the broader scheme of things because of the work I'd done and continued to do. And as you get older, if you don't die or fade away, you become legendary. But being a legend doesn't mean anything other than that you're old.

The incredible success that came with *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, did you find that liberating or confining? At the time I thought it was liberating. In retrospect, I would say the entire experience of being famous was restrictive. I never thought of those restrictions as a penalty until way later. I was so busy learning my craft and going from being a middle-class kid to being wealthy, from being anonymous to being famous. All of this stuff is so big to handle, that when I look back I think, well, that's why a lot of relationships didn't work out. I didn't have enough time to pay attention to anybody else.

Nobody taught me how to pay attention. Nobody told me my priorities were all wrong. And the penalty I paid for that is a typical penalty. You can see people who pay an enormous price for fame when they're young and they burn up. My generation had an incredible role model not to follow and that was Elvis Presley. You may have wanted to be Elvis Presley, but you don't want to die at age 42, looking like he looked. You have to hand it to Paul McCartney, who I think has had an enormous amount of fame but handles it in such a way that he seems to have a relatively normal life, for someone's who's one of the most famous people on the planet. He's not in any danger of self-destruction, by any means.

Have you gone through any notably self-destructive periods? I think there were times I probably overdid it with the usual things, the usual rock'n'roll indulgences. Fortunately, I don't have an addictive personality. So I didn't have to go through the process of rehab or whatever to stop when I realised what I was doing wasn't really good for me. It was just giving me a lot of misinformation, basically, exaggerating everything. Making me feel I was better than

GEORGEROSE/GETTY IMAGES

I was, distorting everything. Making something seem like it was the greatest thing that ever happened to you, when it was actually all shit.

I had to go back and rethink everything when I stopped all that, re-examine what I thought about a lot of things. That's part of fame, as well. It feeds you a lot of misinformation, things become distorted. People like you for no really good reason, people who don't even know you. People dislike you for no really good reason, people who don't know you. It's not good for you. Fame and what comes with it can be very destructive if you don't find a way to handle it, if you lose sight of yourself, which is very easy to do.

Your commercial success carried on after Simon & Garfunkel split, with your first three solo albums and hits like "Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard", "Still Crazy After All These Years", "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover". Then there was the failure at the box office of *One Trick Pony*, the movie you wrote, directed and starred in, and the soundtrack didn't do too well either. How did you react to that? I thought that, actually, was liberating. People weren't paying such close attention to what I was doing and I was able to go off and do *Graceland*. I didn't have to justify that to anyone. If anyone by then was paying attention to what I was doing they would have told me I was crazy. But no-one seemed to expect anything of me.

Were you at a low ebb in your life and work just prior to *Graceland*? I was getting used to the fact that I hadn't had a hit for a while.

Was that in itself a shock to the system, after the years of uninterrupted success? I mean, up to that point did you basically think that anything you did would be a hit because you'd had so many of them? Yes. I'd have to say I did. But I wouldn't describe not having a hit as a shock to the system. That's too strong a phrase. Because I was surprised at a lot of the hits I'd had and didn't know what made them hits. I would never have guessed that "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover" would be No 1.

With *One Trick Pony*, had you reached a stage where writing great songs was no longer enough or not as fulfilling as you'd hoped? I wanted to try something that was on a larger scale. And I did, and it wasn't very good. I shouldn't have thought I would be good at writing a movie, by doing it once. That was a privilege given to me because of my popularity. Usually you have to go and learn how to do that.

By the time I finished it, I knew a lot more about how hard making movies actually is. At first, I still partly couldn't get over the fact that I was starring in a movie that I wrote. It didn't occur to me that my acting and directing talents might prove to be quite so minimal.

The same was true later, writing the musical *The Capeman*. It seemed appropriate for me to do at the time. I didn't have a great desire to make another album. Each album that I make is compared to everything I ever did. Making a movie, I guess, was a way of avoiding that.

> **"I probably overdid it with the usual rock'n'roll indulgences… It was just distorting everything"**

Do you wish you'd been given the chance to make another film? No. I don't think I'm really good enough. You know, *The Capeman* was done last summer in Central Park, to rave reviews, one of them by the same guy who killed it the first time around. I think that piece was way ahead of its time. It was maybe not a great piece of work, but pretty good. The album was an interesting record, too. It was an interesting cross-cultural experiment, bringing Latin music to Broadway and mixing it with doo-wop I thought was really interesting. Was it a hit? No, it wasn't a hit. Was it really bad? No, it really wasn't bad. That's why I allowed it to come back, because I thought it would still work. Whereas if somebody said they'd like to re-release *One Trick Pony*, I'd tell them not to bother.

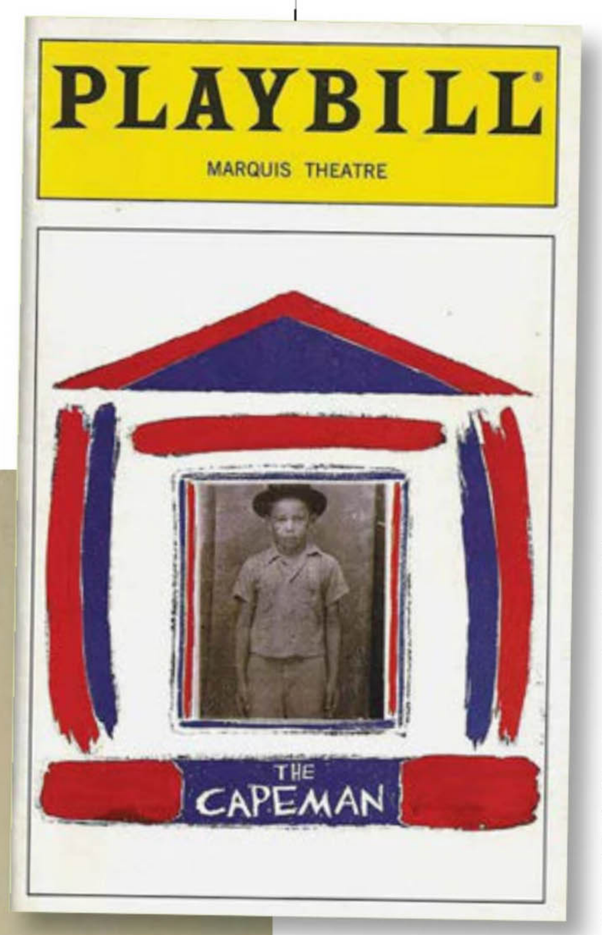
How bad did you personally feel when *The Capeman* flopped? That hurt a lot. Not because the play failed but the criticism of it was vindictive and it was personal. I was surprised that so many people thought I was such an asshole. Maybe we're all assholes and we just don't know it. I mean, yeah, it's rough when they come at you personally. But six months later, it's gone. In any career, you have to have failures. That's how you learn. Success can be an enormous load to carry, because people over-praise you and they want you to just go on doing the one thing.

I remember that people were disappointed with *The Rhythm Of The Saints* after *Graceland* and that's because they wanted me to do *Graceland* again. But you can't do an album like that again. And what would they say if I'd done *Graceland* again? "Oh, you've just done *Graceland* again. That's disappointing."

Graceland had its critics, not of the music, but because you went to South Africa to record it. Yeah, and that reached a level I didn't anticipate. But I think it only reached that level because the record was a big hit. If *Graceland* had been a flop, they wouldn't have said any more to me than they'd said to Malcolm McLaren, who went to South Africa the year before to do *Duck Rock* with South African musicians. And he didn't even pay anybody, he didn't give anybody any credit.

Anyway, I think *Graceland* was remarkable in two different ways. One, it was a very interesting artistic leap that combined cultures in a way that was accessible and gave people great joy and insight into another country. It was very successful as a marriage of different cultures, which is not easy to do. The other thing is it provoked a really interesting political discussion, which really came down to how effective is a cultural boycott if the people that it's affecting most are the people who are being oppressed? And that eventually turned people away from the cultural boycott as a tool of fighting that particular kind of oppression, because it wasn't an efficient tool. It didn't do the job. It did the opposite. *Graceland* was the catalyst that got people into that discussion. It was really Hugh Masekela who focused that discussion and said, "Hey, this is a good thing for South Africa. We want our music out there."

What did you think when people said you should have used the opportunity to write an explicit anti-apartheid song for the album? Well, the statement that



"It was an interesting cross-cultural experiment": working on *The Capeman*, 1998

CAPEMAN. (PHOTO BY MICHAEL NORCIA/SYGMA VIA GETTY IMAGES

I was making was a far bigger statement. I was doing what the songs were telling people to do. I actually went there, dealt equally with other musicians. I didn't condescend. I wasn't condescended to. We became friends. There were friends I made then I still have to this day. Hugh Masekela and Joseph Shabalala. Bakithi Kumalo and Tony Cedras, who're still in my band. And, you know, when I listened to what popular music was in South Africa, it wasn't political music.

Also, I think if you have the gift of writing a political song, like those early Bob Dylan songs that were political, it's a gift to be able to write that kind of song. Phil Ochs had it, too. But most other people really couldn't. So you get "Eve Of Destruction" or other imitations of those really good songs and it makes it seem like it's frivolous. So you stay in your own world.

Somebody said, "If I went to South Africa I certainly wouldn't come back and write a song like 'You Can Call Me Al'." But "You Can Call Me Al" was a pretty interesting song. It starts off and it's about somebody who's completely self-involved and travels to a place where he becomes aware of the universe and the whole world from the experience he has. And essentially that was the gift of *Graceland*, as opposed to it tearing down the walls of apartheid. It showed people, it was inspiring without being didactic. And the criticism was, "You have a responsibility to be didactic."

Martin Luther King: "He recognised our potential as human beings"

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES; BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

"It provoked discussion": with Ladysmith Black Mambazo on the *Graceland* tour, London, 1987

And it's not that I've never been didactic. I have songs in my repertoire that are more pointedly political, like "American Tune". There are always references in my songs to what's going on, and *So Beautiful Or So What* is no exception. When you're writing songs about one subject, the people who agree with you are already there, and the people who don't agree don't even want to listen. So if you wanted to convert somebody from one mindset to another, coming at them straight ahead with blunt force probably won't work as effectively as another approach. And *Graceland* was instinctually the other approach.

There's a dramatic and unexpected reference on "So Beautiful Or So What" to the assassination of Martin Luther King. How did that get into the song? It's like painting. You don't know what you're going to do when you get to a certain place on the canvas. Then it reveals itself when you do it. The verse came I didn't know from where and then it seemed to fit perfectly; he was one of the great people who said that life is beautiful, it's not so what. He recognised our potential as human beings, what at our best we can be capable of, what life can be, an extraordinary place for everyone, as long as it is genuinely for everyone. But if I hadn't been able to come up with a reason for him to be there, I would have taken him out.

It's the same thing in "Questions For The Angels", where all of a sudden Jay-Z appears in the middle of this dreamy, questioning song. A few years ago they were doing a month of my music at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. I would sing a song or two every night and so I would drive out to Brooklyn, and as you came over the Brooklyn Bridge there was this billboard with Jay-Z on it. That's how it came to be in the song, which started with just the guitar and those changes and then I think the first line – "*A pilgrim on a pilgrimage walked across the Brooklyn Bridge.*" I thought that was a good first line. You know, where's he going? I just have to follow him, see what he's up to.

When I listen to songs and I know where they're going and they go there, I don't like it. I find that boring at this time in my life, after writing hundreds of songs. I like it if I can follow the whole song and it stays interesting.

When you wrote the first three songs, did you have a clear idea what this album would be about, what you wanted to say on it? No. I don't usually have a clear idea of what the album is until I've written somewhere around six to eight songs. That's when I begin to see the work as a complete work. I still think of albums as a complete work. But I don't plan, I don't have a theme.

I was very surprised that five out of the first six songs I wrote all had something about God in them. To me, it didn't really mean anything. It wasn't like I was spending a lot of time thinking about this, but maybe subconsciously I was. My first thought was, people will think that I'm really into questions about my spiritual being or mortality, which wouldn't have been a lie, but I didn't set out to explore it.

So there was no predetermined theme that you wrote songs to articulate? No. Part of

what I like about the process is that I don't know where it's going. I get pleasure from the discovery. It just sort of goes and I just sort of trail along. Sometimes I influence it, because I keep notes in a book, phrases. Like the title of the album, it was on the first page of my notes. "Everything is so beautiful or so what." But that was the last song I wrote. So I didn't come around to picking up that phrase and using it until the end and then I thought that was a pretty good question to put on top of this pile of songs.

There are a lot of questions about belief in them, questions about God and spirituality. And it sort of came down to, either you think life is an incredible gift or it's no big deal. To a zebra, would they care if the whole human species disappeared? Of course they wouldn't. What a gift! You can't imagine them saying, "Did you hear what happened to the human race, what a bummer!"

Back with Art Garfunkel, making "a thing sound like it's a memory of something" at the 41st New Orleans Jazz Festival, April 24, 2010

Do you think it's part of man's arrogance that he thinks he'll be missed if he wasn't here? Yes, no question. We're an arrogant species. We have our admirable traits, but we're also garbage makers. We make a mess of things. In "Love And Hard Times", like God says, "*These people are slobs*".

That's a pretty harsh view of mankind, isn't it? Harsh? No, absolutely not. Look what we did to the planet. We ruined the planet. Take away the human beings and all their inventions and all the stuff we've made and the mess we make and you've got a much cleaner planet. It would be a lot healthier than it is right now. Would life be better for a zebra without mankind? Absolutely. Would it be better for the trees? Absolutely.

Where would you place yourself in the pantheon of popular songwriters? I don't have to do that.

You must have an opinion. Not at the top.

How close? It varies.

The album was largely recorded at your own demo studio and self-financed. Yes, right. I really wanted to get off Warner Bros. I didn't think they understood what I was doing on the last couple of albums. They just wanted me to make hit singles, which is not really possible for me. It would be a fluke if I had a hit single. I don't make that kind of music any more.

It had become very frustrating. Whether or not you achieve what you set out to achieve, when you put years of work into something and it's released and it sinks beneath the waves, it's frustrating. But you know, somebody hears it, gets what you've done. It's never entirely lost. It just doesn't sell millions. And I think that's age-appropriate, really. What I'm thinking about now and what I'm talking about is really not for a huge audience. It would be unusual to find anybody at my age who is selling enormous amounts of records to the record-buying public.

Do you think there's a chance that the new album will speak to a younger generation, or will it merely sell to the audience that grew up with you? Both, I'd like to think. Maybe not equally. A lot of people from the '60s have stopped listening to music. They got bored or don't listen to anything but the old music. I do know that there's quite a few people in their twenties, young musicians who are listening. Everybody wants to have a role model, some guidance. The handful of people of my generation that have survived are, for better or worse, role models. People will look at us and go, "Well, I don't want to turn out like that." Or, "I'd like to turn out like that." At least we're here to be observed and seen, because for rock'n'roll, the first generation disappeared except as mythic figures, but few of them evolved.

"It would be a fluke if I had a hit single. I don't make that kind of music any more"

But the struggle of Dylan and the Stones and McCartney and Neil and all the others is to see the possibility of talent continuing to evolve, as is the case in other arts. Nobody says you should stop painting when you're 60. Nobody says you should stop writing novels when you're 60. Nobody says that BB King should stop playing the blues. So The Rolling Stones go out there and people call them dinosaurs and they say, "What are you talking about? We're reinventing what you can do at our age and if you don't like it, OK, but don't try to stop us."

I don't really have a whole lot of choice about what it is I do, because my mind keeps doing this. That's what I am, and if the work is valued in any way, that's great. If it isn't, then someone else will make that donation. The public will always find the artists it needs.

I'm just an artist, because that's my personality trait, a characteristic of how my brain works. I can't figure out a lot of things, I'm not a computer scientist. This is who I am. This is what I do. I make up songs and I try to make them as interesting as possible. Stand back and just let me get on with it.

THE knock on the door about 10 minutes ago let us know we need to wrap this up, time soon for Simon to be heading for the Kennedy Center and tonight's show. He seems in no rush, though, to see me off the premises and as I get my things together and he checks his itinerary, I ask if there are plans to reschedule the tour with Art Garfunkel that was cancelled last year because of Garfunkel's vocal-cord paresis. "Well, his voice hasn't come back yet," he says. "But if it's still appropriate at some future time to sing a couple of shows with Artie, I'd do that. The last time we went out I think we did 15 or 17 shows and that was fine. I was happy with that. That was enough."

Do you spend much time together on tour, or do you just meet up when you go on stage? "Not too much time together, no. Once or twice we'll have a long evening together and talk. Our friendship goes way back, to before we started singing. And when we leave the place of the singing and go back into the friendship and who we are and where we came from, then it's really pleasant. I've known Artie since age of 11. There's no-one else I've known that long."

Are those reunion shows more fun for the audience than you? "I end up getting enjoyment out of them," he says. "I like to reinvent the old material, take the songs somewhere they maybe haven't been. I try to imagine what people's memory is of that time, hearing a particular song and to recreate that. And that's interesting to make a thing sound like it's a memory of something. It examines nostalgia rather than being merely nostalgic. It takes the kitsch out of nostalgia. Otherwise it would be really hard to go out and do those songs. But to do that for, say, 15 shows, that worked, and it was fun to hang out with Artie, but I couldn't have done more. That was about the most I could have done.

I go out in April, touring *So Beautiful Or So What*. After that, we'll see. But this album is all that matters to me right now. ●

BARRY BRECHEISEN/WIREIMAGE

RELEASED: 03 JUNE | 2016

Stranger To Stranger

Here comes septuagenarian Simon. The world long his oyster, now a tragicomic universe of sound opens up. BY STEPHEN DALTON

"SOUND is the theme of this album," Paul Simon wrote in the press notes that accompanied his 13th solo album, *Stranger To Stranger*. "As much as it's about the subjects of the individual songs. If people get that, I'll be pleased."

Emphatically resisting the urge to go gently into that good night, the first album Simon released after turning 70 certainly proved to be one of the most sonically adventurous works of his long career, richly layered with bells and drones, loops and echoes, artfully deconstructed arrangements and supple jazzy textures. *Stranger To Stranger* also achieved the rare feat of striking a fertile balance between experimental and accessible, critical and commercial. Featuring flamenco backing bands, Italian techno producers, veteran doo-wop choirs and contemporary classical composers, plus an arsenal of exotic steampunk instruments conceived by 20th-century avant-garde pioneer Harry Partch, the album became Simon's first British chart-topper in almost three decades and scored his highest-ever placing on the US Billboard charts, debuting at No 3.

Working with Brian Eno on his 2006 album *Surprise* appears to have had a liberating effect on Simon, who deftly sidesteps any autumnal drift into staid elder-statesman respectability with *Stranger To Stranger*. Indeed, this late-period left-field masterpiece sounds as eccentric, eclectic and insatiably curious as anything by fellow Eno collaborator and art-pop veteran David Byrne. As he freewheels through glitchy electronica, Afro-funk, blues, gospel, Brazilian percussion and rootsy Americana, the vast musical terrain that the 74-year-old New Yorker has covered since his Greenwich Village coffee-shop folkie days becomes strikingly evident.

And yet most of these songs still sound like Simon at his wry and melodic best, maintaining their author's droll observational wit and quirky conversational tone, skipping across half a century of multicultural genre-hopping with light-footed precision. "There are elements that remain from the different eras that I passed through," Simon explained to Vox.com in June 2016. "But in my music I don't think of it as one era or another, just a continuous river that I'm flowing on. And when something catches my ear I row the boat over there and listen and try to make music with it."

Three tracks on *Stranger To Stranger* are collaborations with Italian electronic producer Clap! Clap!, aka Cristiano Crisci, whose own releases draw on a similarly rich hinterland of jazz and world music. The first is opening number "The Werewolf", a darkly comic rumination on creeping mortality and impending catastrophe set to an infectiously snappy rhythmic patchwork of Afro-pop, shuffle blues and avant-roots clatter. "*Most obits are mixed reviews*," Simon deadpans over a twanging Indian string instrument called a gopichand, the source of the song's central lupine refrain: "*Life is a lottery, a lot of people lose...*"

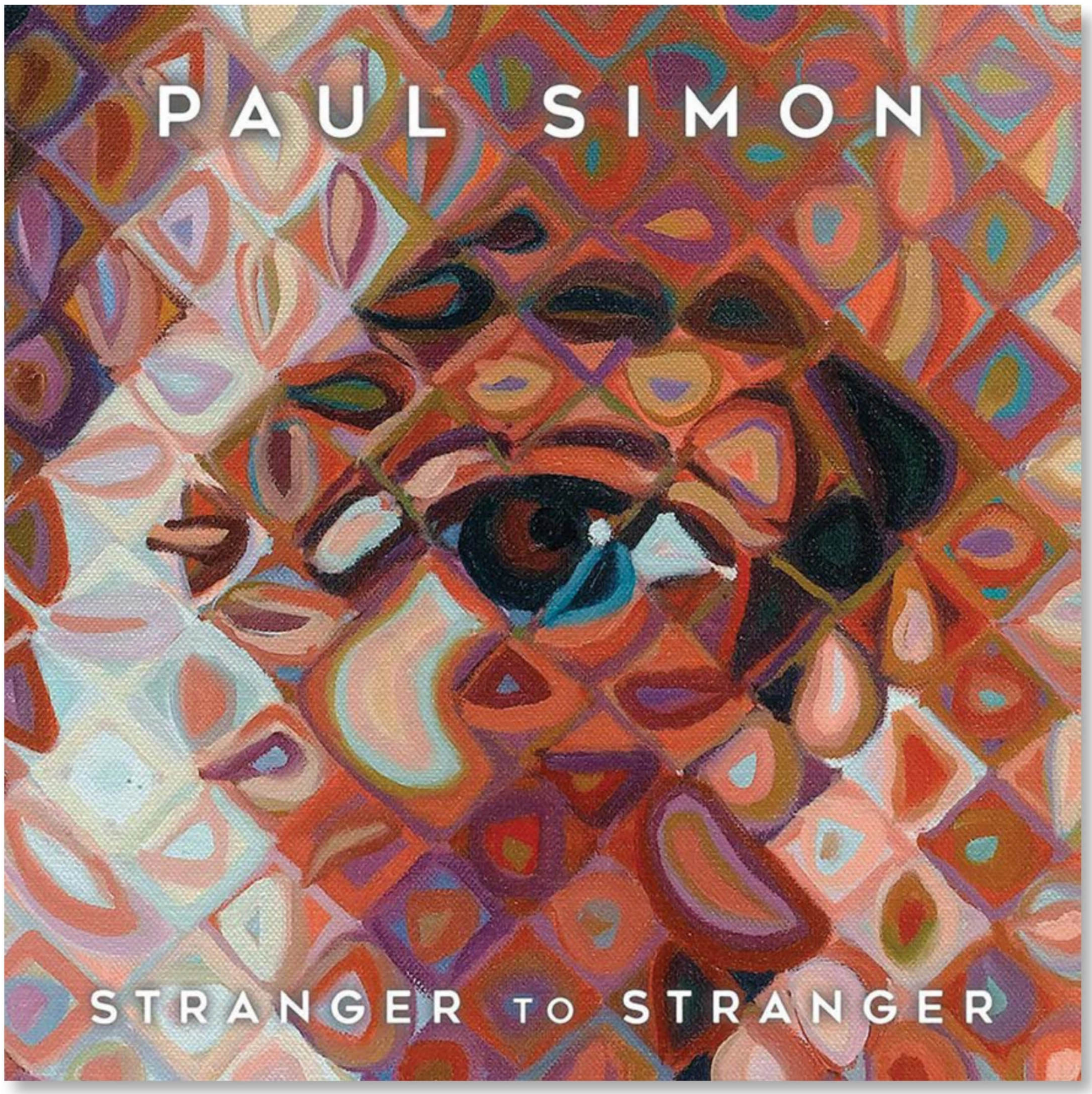
Crisci is also involved with "Wristband", the album's lead single, a deliciously sardonic snapshot of fame and misfortune couched in a taut, finger-snapping, lightly mechanised drum'n'bass arrangement. The song's narrator relates an ego-bruising anecdote about being locked out of his own gig because he lacks the correct security bracelet, a light comic trifle that Simon elegantly expands into a commentary on deeper social inequality in "*towns that never get a wristband*". This masterclass in wit and economy now feels, with hindsight, like an ominous warning about the festering heartland resentment that landed Donald Trump in the White House.

"I'll say this about Trump: anger is an addiction," Simon told *Billboard* five months before the election. "We like it. The brain likes it. And now you've got a country full of addicts. And the media and certain politicians are the dealers."

Simon deploys recurring characters on *Stranger To Stranger*, most notably the visionary mystic protagonist of "Street Angel", who we later encounter suffering a psychotic episode in hospital in the semi-sequel track "In A Parade". "The idea of finishing one song and having the character appear in another song appeals to me," Simon told *Rolling Stone*. "I don't see why characters shouldn't appear more than once." The first song is a gloriously groove-infatuated confection, a kinetic tapestry of pan-global percussion and electronically warped vocals, the latter a snapshot of schizophrenia couched in latin-jazz carnival-funk and surreal stream-of-conscious lyrics: "*My head's a lollipop and everyone wants to lick it.*"

CRTICS' VERDICTS

"On this inspired album, jittery character sketches alternate with introspective ballads bearing echoes of Simon & Garfunkel, astride variations on the exotic rhythms that have propelled his music since *Graceland*. The presence of S&G engineer Roy Halee deepens the connection between Simon's rich past and still vital present."
Bud Scoppa, Uncut, July, 2016



The album also includes a couple of short instrumental interludes, reworked from an unused stage play score. "In The Garden of Edie", whose punning title pays homage to Simon's musician wife Edie Brickell, is a slight but lovely sketch interwoven with filigree threads of flamenco guitar. The one-minute metronomic ticker "The Clock" is barely even a full composition at all, more like a sound effect, but Simon still manages to elevate it with radiant ambi-folk instrumentation.

Among the more conventional, serious-minded tracks on *Stranger To Stranger* is "The Riverbank", a mournful, bluesy stroll enhanced with light-touch electronic elements. It was inspired by the Sandy Hook elementary school massacre in December 2012, in which a teacher friend of Simon's was killed, as well as a visit to army veterans at Walter Reed military hospital near Washington DC. The album's title track is also a sombre, brooding meditation on love and the creative process: "*Certain melodies tear your heart apart/ Reconstruction is a lonesome art.*" Both are solidly crafted pieces with a vaguely Sting-like feel, leaning more towards tasteful restraint than the dazzling lyrical and sonic promiscuity that prevails elsewhere.

Simon's lifelong love of baseball informs the parping brass and shimmering Afro-funk guitars of "Cool Papa Bell". The lyric ostensibly pays tribute to James "Cool Papa" Bell, a legendary player from an era when American sport was still racially segregated, but it also digresses into a bemused disquisition on the word "*motherfucker*" and its casual use, which is both hilarious and audacious. Then the album closes on a sublime high with "The Insomniac's Lullaby", a woozy waltz-time journey through the nerve-jangling nocturnal soundworld layered with gently discordant chimes, fluid rubato tempo changes, haunting ambient whispers and an imploring prayer-like lyric: "*Oh Lord, don't keep me up all night/With questions I can't understand.*"

> It freewheels through glitchy electronica, Brazilian percussion, Afro-funk, blues…

Though it wears its experimentalism lightly, *Stranger To Stranger* finds the later-period Simon boldly planting one foot in the post-techno avant-pop soundworld of Radiohead or Four Tet. It remains his last album of all-new material to date, a late critical and commercial peak that proves the Baby Boomer generation are far from the complacent old-timers mocked in mean-spirited millennial caricature. In light of recent hints about retirement, this may yet prove to be Simon's career-capping swansong, the work of a master craftsman who knows the musical rules so well that he can now effortlessly break them in magical new ways. ●

SLEEVENOTES | Stranger To Stranger

1. The Werewolf ★★★★
2. Wristband ★★★★
3. The Clock ★★★
4. Street Angel ★★★★
5. Stranger To Stranger ★★★★
6. In A Parade ★★★
7. Proof Of Love ★★★★
8. In The Garden Of Edie ★★★
9. The Riverbank ★★★
10. Cool Papa Bell ★★★★
11. Insomniac's Lullaby ★★★★

Label: Concord
Produced by: Paul Simon, Roy Halee
Recorded at: Simon's Cottage, New Canaan, Connecticut; Montclair State University, New Jersey
Personnel incl: Paul Simon (vocals, acoustic guitar, elec gtr, autoharp, baritone gtr, bass harmonica, celeste, chromelodeon, clock, glockenspiel, gopichand, harmonium, mbira, perc, 12-string), Vincent Nguini (elec gtr, acoustic gtr), Mark Stewart (mbira, trombadoo), Carlos Henriquez (bass), Bakithi Kumalo (bass), Clap! Clap! (electronic drums, programming, synth), Jim Oblon (drums, programming)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 3

"I never envisioned that music would be a lifetime's worth of employment"

And what a lifetime. Too small for baseball, what else could pop's premier let-it-go guy do but make demos for Burt Bacharach, write classic songs "in a dopamine flow", live and die by cinema and get drawn, for better or worse, into politics? "The music keeps growing," he tells MICHAEL BONNER between cat jokes, "Is there anything left to learn? It's infinity."

MYRNA SUAREZ

UNCUT 7/2016

IN 1964, Paul Simon visited the UK for the first time. "It was very exciting," he says. "The Beatles, Carnaby Street. Mods and rockers. It was the centre of... well, you know exactly what it was. It was incredible." Back then, he was an unknown folk singer, plying his trade in small, smoky pubs and clubs. 52 years on, however and Simon's circumstances have changed considerably. Today, aged 74, he has taken up temporary residence in a series of interconnected suites in Claridge's.

"Don't mind me, I'm just wandering," he says as he pads softly along the corridors, peering into rooms whose furniture has been removed to accommodate visiting TV crews or to house a makeshift office for his management team. His clothes are unprepossessing – a navy jumper, jeans, black shoes – apart from a lilac baseball cap with "Timothy Dwight College Yale University" stitched across the top (a souvenir of a recent talk he gave to students there) and a green pendant that hangs round his neck on a leather cord. "I got it when we played in New Zealand," he says. "It's a Maori piece, it's jade."

Simon is about to release *Stranger To Stranger*, his 13th solo album, co-produced by Roy Halee, a collaborator since the Simon & Garfunkel days. A typically spry collection of songs, this new record incorporates African woodwind, Peruvian drums, electronic beats and Harry Partch's fabulous menagerie of experimental instruments. One song details Simon's meeting with a Brazilian healer, another addresses his experiences performing at the funeral of a teacher killed in the Sandy Hook school shootings [*in Connecticut, December 2012*], while a third is a tribute to Cool Papa Bell, a centre-fielder in Negro League baseball from 1922 to 1950s. The album began, admits Simon, "in a season of emotional winter. Barren landscape, no ideas, anxiety about no ideas, lethargy spreading to increased caffeine consumption."

As Simon explains, his talent is more the patient and painstaking kind. "One of my ways of writing is for me to sit with a guitar and find an interesting guitar chord or series of chords or something, anything, to just begin," he explains solemnly. "The real game is, can you make something that's interesting enough, entertaining enough, intriguing enough that the listener will listen again?" Simon has always written slowly, but after the failure of 1980's *One Trick Pony*, he suffered from a prolonged bout of writer's block. Even now, he acknowledges that "the urge to create is stirring, but nothing comes of it".

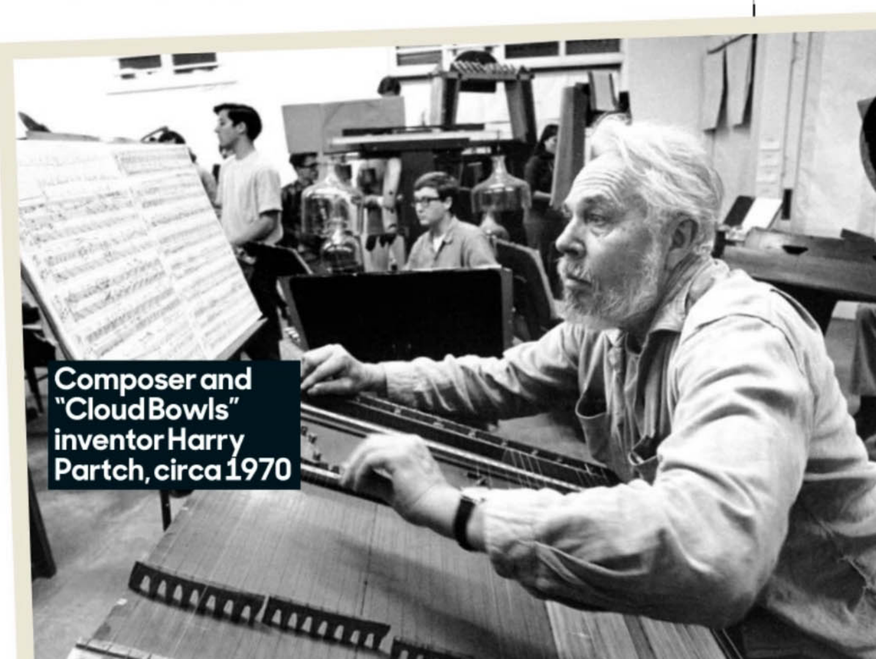
Simon's speech is careful and considered, characterised by brief pauses while he composes his thoughts. But he's also capable of moments of great levity. At one point, he mugs shamelessly, recalling the kind of put-up schlub played by Larry David in *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. He talks animatedly about the genesis of "The Sound Of Silence" (which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year), the end of Simon & Garfunkel and the *Graceland* controversy. He speaks fondly, too, about the British folk scene of the '60s – a pivotal time, he claims, every bit as significant as its storied American counterpart. "I always feel good in London," he says. "Even though everything's changed so much. When I drive through the streets, I think, 'I used to walk round here...'"

Simon says: "I always feel good in London" – circa 1965

Taking a seat, he twists the cap off a bottle of water and considers the enduring qualities of his craft. "The music keeps growing," he says.

How do you feel when you've finished an album? Are you happy to let it go, or do you struggle to stop tinkering? I'm a let-it-go guy. I've been listening constantly for years and years. I don't see any point now in going back and listening again more intensely. I'm more likely to make a mistake if I make any changes now. I've had plenty of time to correct my errors. In five years, I'll listen to this and say, "Oh, I should have sung it that way. I should have done this, I should have done that." But that's what you do on live tours. Even though you're repeating the same songs, they get better. If you're paying attention. If you want them to get better.

How do you write these days? I have a little cottage, that's my studio. I often write in my car, when I'm driving along listening. Just a word of advice for anybody who's driving near me: you're making a big mistake. When I'm in writing mode, I'm writing all day long. It's what I'm thinking about before I fall asleep. It's not like something else doesn't take my attention, like I have to go and pick up my youngest, or



Composer and "Cloud Bowls" inventor Harry Partch, circa 1970

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

you have to go shopping, or whatever. But for the rest of the time, I'm thinking, 'This line, that line, maybe it would be better that way, maybe this would be funny...' It's pretty intense and it goes on for usually about three years. By the time I'm finished, I'm finished.

You've always been open to different sounds, and you used the Harry Partch instruments on this album. Do you have a favourite? Oh, they're fabulous. It depends on what you're using them for. Maybe the Cloud Bowls. They're so magical. You can play them and hear what it is. The Chromelodeon, it doesn't play what you think it's going to play. But the Cloud Bowls are beautiful, the overtones and how they ring against each other. They're also physically beautiful to look at.

You collect unusual percussive instruments, right? I divide the rhythm instruments into skin, wood and metal. If I hear a shaker that's really nice, I'll get it. So I have a lot of different shakers. The same with the metal. I particularly like West African instruments. They have a nice rawness. When you hear a sound that you like, if it's for sale, I'll buy it. I don't know where to put it, but I'll buy it.

Is the cottage full up, then? With racks and racks of guitars, yeah. The space is big enough and they're put in their shelves and there's a big iron gate that comes down and the room is humidified and locked and fire proofed, and all of that stuff. I even have the guitar that I wrote all the Simon & Garfunkel songs on. There are two of them. One of them is in the Rock'n'Roll Hall Of Fame and the other one I turned into a high-string guitar. It's beautiful. I still use it sometimes, yes.

***Stranger To Stranger* is dedicated to Mort Lewis, Simon & Garfunkel's manager. What kind of man was he?** He just passed away, at age 92. He was my old friend. A really great guy. He started managing us right at the beginning.

What do you think he saw in you? He was a jazz guy, he was managing Dave Brubeck. We had a No 1 record by the time we met him, "The Sound Of Silence". A lot of people liked Simon & Garfunkel, so I guess he saw what people saw. He was a funny guy, honest. Many, many years passed and we still remained friends. We lived not too far apart so occasionally we would have dinner. He loved to tell jokes. He was one of my main source of jokes. People stopped telling jokes, people don't tell jokes anymore.

Tell us a joke, then. Tell you a joke? Let's see. What can I give you? Here's one of them. This guy's got a cat. He's absolutely dedicated to his cat. His brother says to him, "Your life is totally dominated by the cat. Why don't you just take a trip to Paris for a week? I'll take care of the cat, he'll be fine." So he leaves specific instructions how to take care of the cat. Flies to Paris. Next morning, the first thing he does is call his brother. "Hi, I'm here. How's the cat?" "Oh, the cat. The cat's dead." "What? Oh, my God. I can't believe it. What kind of way is that tell somebody news like that?" So the brother says, "How am I supposed to tell you?" He says, "You do it gradually. 'The cat is on the roof. But it's fine. The fire department are coming so there's absolutely nothing to worry about.' Then the next day you say, 'The cat fell off the roof but fortunately he landed in a tree. He seems to be settled. The police are coming to get him.' Then the next day, 'The cat fell out of the tree, broke a leg. But we got the best vet we could. He says no problem, he can set the leg. He'll be fine.' Then the next day you say, 'We gave him anaesthesia, we did everything we could, but we just couldn't save him.' That is how you tell somebody a thing like that. But forget it. How's Mum?' So the brother says, "Mum is on the roof..."

Playback: Carole King, Paul Simon and Gerry Goffin during a recording session in New York, circa 1959

"Bert Bacharach, Carole King and I used to do demos for other people. Anybody..."

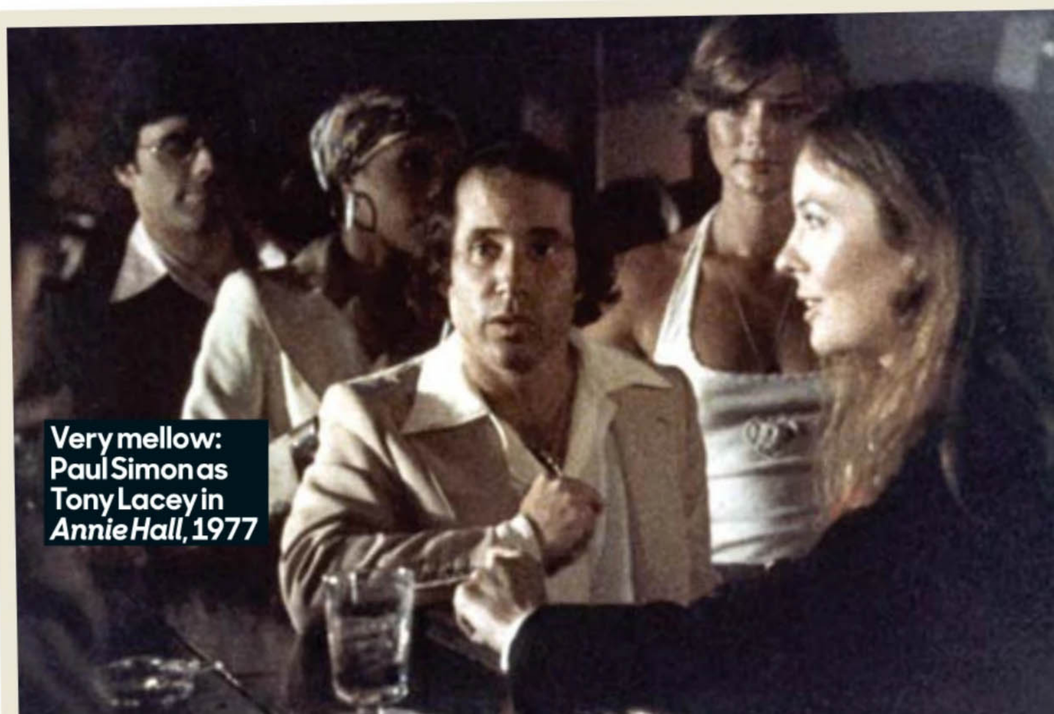
Paul Simon

I've always wondered whether there was much crossover between the stand-up comedy, jazz and folk scenes in New York in the 1950s and '60s... Yeah, there was! Lenny Bruce and jazz, The Kingston Trio and folk. My father was a musician, so there was always this musician humour going around. I was funny anyway when I was a kid. Artie was funny too, that's why we became friends. We had the same absurd sense of humour. That, and we were the only two guys in the neighbourhood that wanted to sing. So there was a connection at the time. But it's long gone now and as I say, people don't tell jokes any more.

Did you see *Inside Llewyn Davis*? No, I skipped it. I heard it was terrible. It was based on Dave Van Ronk, who I knew. But they didn't. I like the Coen brothers, I think they're really good – really good – but I figured, you're never going to get Dave Van Ronk, right. He was a real character and they're going to try and capture the folk scene and they're not going to get it and I'm going to look at it and say, "That's not how it was." A funnier film on that subject is *A Mighty Wind*.

You were in *Annie Hall*... Yeah, Woody Allen asked me. It was fun. I'd get my lines and I'd say, "You want me to play this rock'n'roll producer, but that's not the way he'd talk." So he'd say, "Say whatever you want but just make sure you end it with, 'Come on back to our hotel room as it's going to be very mellow.' Make sure you get that in – 'It's very mellow' – as my joke is based on 'It's very mellow.' But otherwise just say whatever you want." That's what I did. That was it.

Talking of record producers, you're back with Roy Halee on this album. Do you remember the first time you worked together? He did the audition tape for Simon & Garfunkel for Columbia and our first album. What do I remember about doing that audition tape? Just how nervous we were, hoping that we would be signed. We were quite proficient by that point. We'd recorded when we were kids. We did a couple of solo records. I used to do demos for lots of people. Instead of working as a waiter or something, I would do demos. Burt Bacharach. Carole King and I used to do demos for other people. Anybody. I think my fee was $50 for an hour. So if I could do three demos a week, that was all the money I needed. I was living at home, so I didn't have to pay the rent. Buy gas for my car, go out on a date, buy whatever clothes I wanted. Meanwhile, I learned how to use a mic, overdub. Basically, how to record.



Very mellow: Paul Simon as Tony Lacey in *Annie Hall*, 1977

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO 12/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Friends reunited: S&G at Madison Square Garden, NYC, December 3, 2003

Roy was with you on the first solo album, too. Yeah, Phil [*Ramone*] did a bunch of the first one and so did Roy. Roy left to go and do Artie's solo albums. The three great engineers at the time were Phil Ramone, Tom Dowd who was down in Miami and Roy Halee, who worked exclusively for Columbia. After Simon & Garfunkel broke up, there was a competition for who was going to get Roy. After my first solo album, Clive Davis said, "Artie gets him." So I went to Phil. Phil made *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*, *Still Crazy After All These Years*, *One Trick Pony*.

How do you view that run of albums now? They're good albums. *There Goes Rhymin' Simon* was a very happy album, a joyful album. It was done with the Muscle Shoals rhythm section. That was great, to go down to Muscle Shoals and work with those guys, they were fantastic. I brought Reverend Claude Jeter with me, who sang with The Swan Silvertones, who were my favourite gospel quartet. Part of the inspiration for "Bridge Over Troubled Water" came from that quartet. We drove from the airport down to Muscle Shoals, it was a two or three hours' drive, and he'd tell me what it was like to tour in the South as a gospel quartet in the late '40s and early '50s.

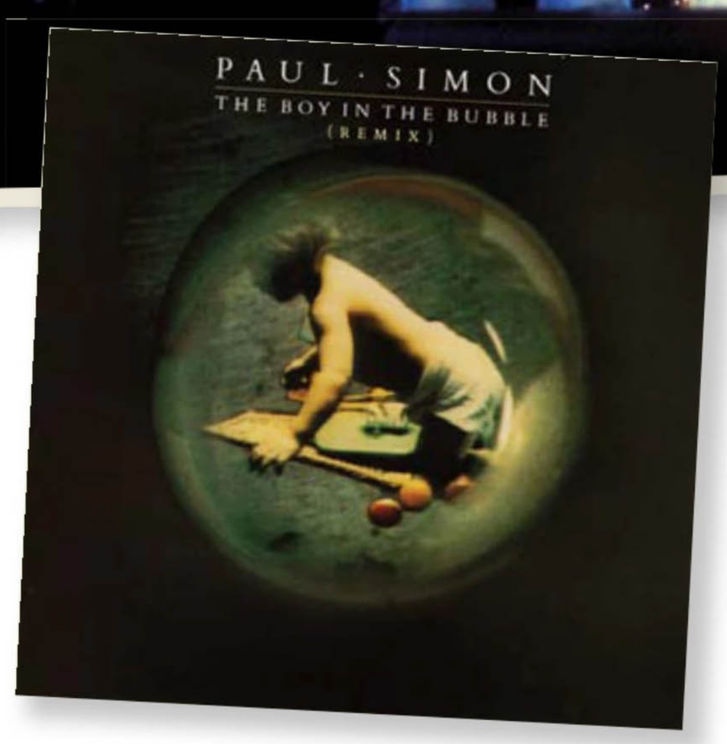
"American Tune" is one of the great songs from that period. "American Tune" was done by an English producer. Paul Samwell-Smith. The melody is pre-Bach, but Bach took it and made the glorious, famous piece that I learned it from. I had enough nerve to go and write a bridge for that...

What was the inspiration for the lyrics? Nixon won.

That's it? Yeah, that's it. But it's interesting that those songs have lasted. I'm not bragging about it. I find it amazing. Bernie Sanders used "America" for his first political ad, and it was a big hit – as an ad. He won the Iowa caucus. I was glad to give it to him, as I thought he was a real stand-up, tell-the-truth guy. What I found interesting, even flattering, was that a song that old would still have that emotional effect 40 years later. Same with "Sound Of Silence", which is older. I was 21 when I wrote it. Same with "Boy In The Bubble", which is quoted in today's *Wall Street Journal*.

Why do you think that is? I guess, for some reason, those songs didn't become dated and corny and nostalgic.

You came to Britain in 1964. What were the stand-out qualities of the English folk scene? Yeah, the English folk scene was as good as the US folk scene. Some of those players were really good and charismatic. We were on the same circuit, and we all lived around the same place. Around that time I was living around Belsize Park, so it wasn't too far away from where Bert Jansch lived or John Renbourn. I knew Sandy Denny, Jackson Frank. Martin Carthy – I rented Martin's flat in Belsize Park – £7 a week.



What was the circuit like at that time? Mostly you played in some room above a pub, where they set up some chairs. Maybe they had a microphone with speakers, or maybe they didn't then you sang without it. Or there were clubs. There was a club in Soho they called Les Cousins. That was my home club. I played there more than other places. When I went up north, I played in Widnes and Warrington. It was around there, one of those railway stations, that "Homeward Bound" is about. You slept on a couch. Whoever ran the club let you sleep on their couch. You saved money. I used to get paid around that time maybe £15 a night, which was considered pretty good. Then right before Simon & Garfunkel hit, I got up to £20, £25 a night. At the time, the average working man's salary was £37 and sixpence or something. £37 essentially. So here I was, making maybe £75-£80 a week as a kid.

What did you spend it on? Nothing! Taxis instead of taking the tube. I moved out of Belsize Park into a flat that had a bathroom in it. But I never was as happy as when I was at Belsize Park. I didn't spend it on anything because I didn't need anything or want anything. "The Sound Of Silence" hit and all of sudden, we had made a million dollars. But to me, it was like, 'I know you think £20 a night is a ridiculous amount of money but I'm actually good now and I'm worth it. So I don't feel guilty at all!' [*laughs*]

"The average salary was £37 a week, so here I was, making £75-80 as a kid"
Paul Simon

What do you remember about writing "The Sound Of Silence"? I wrote it in the bathroom in my parent's house because the room was tiled, so there was an echo. I used to turn the lights off and leave the water running. It was like white noise, you know? My brother says it was amazing that I wrote it, because everything I'd written before that was way below it in quality. It was a step up. It was probably one of those things when you're in some kind of serotonin/dopamine flow, and it just comes out. But I was too young to know that those things happened. So I just took it as, "That's a good one, I could close my act with this one."

It's 50 years old this year. Do you get sentimental about anniversaries? I don't know, I don't think about any of these as big anniversaries. I don't celebrate them. I don't have any significant emotional attachment to any of the anniversaries or any of it, other than a very warm feeling about when I lived here. A kind of nostalgia, but I'm not actually very prone to nostalgia. Certainly not about my own stuff. If I hear a record that I liked when I was a kid, and I hadn't heard it in a long time, I could get that pleasure of nostalgia.

Can you still identify with the 21-year-old Paul Simon who wrote "The Sound Of Silence"? I remember who I was. I was just coming out of the phase where I was playing baseball for the schools that I was in. I was a good baseball player but I said, "Realistically, you're never going to be a baseball player. You're too small to be a baseball player. That's over." I know that I had a tremendous interest in making records as I did all those demos. I was an English Literature major in college, which I chose as my major because I had a crush on a girl who was an

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS

English major. I just liked playing music, I wanted to do that. I never envisioned that it would be a lifetimes worth of employment or that I would ever be having an interview like this, at this point.

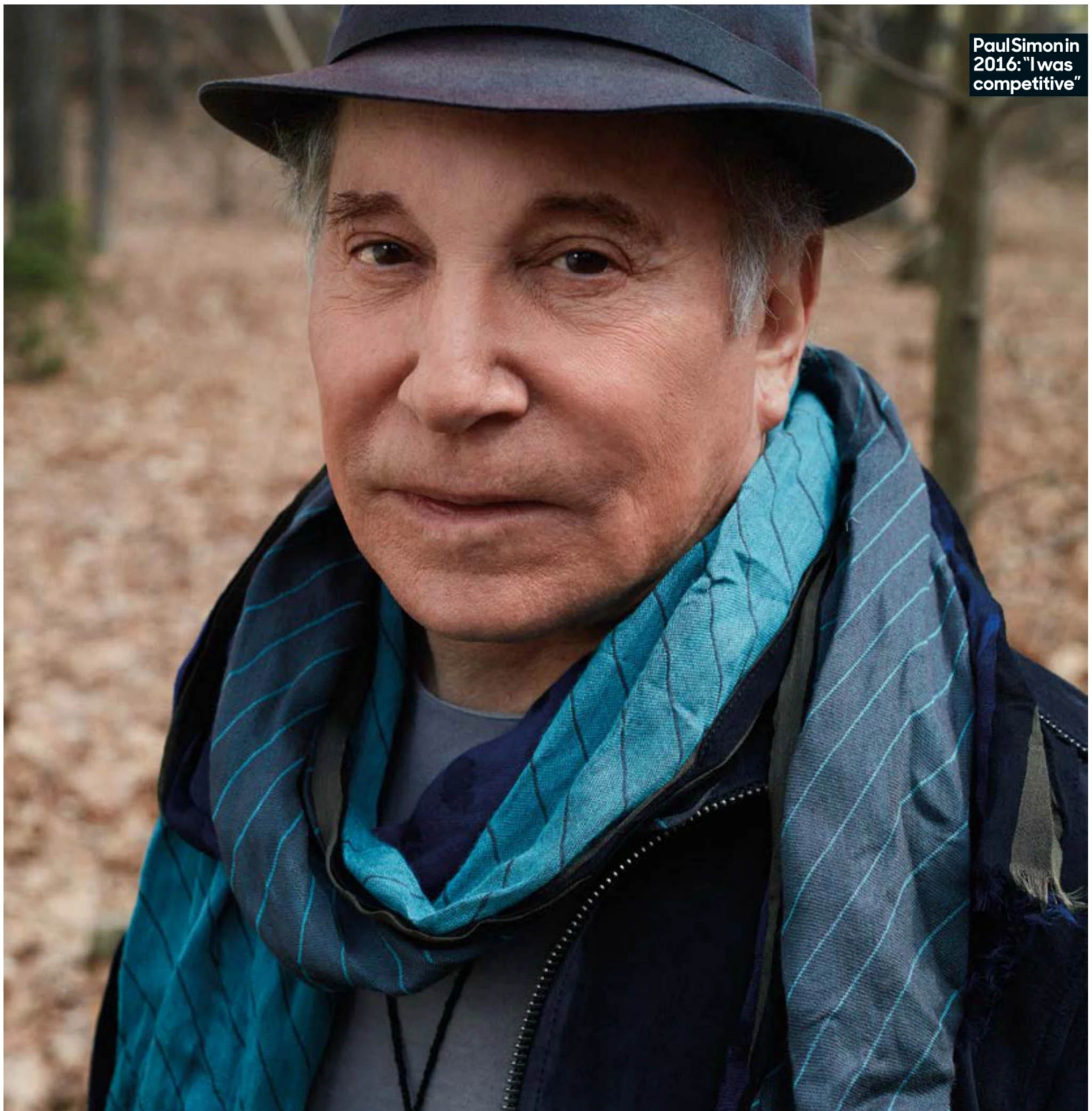
Were you ambitious at all? Yeah. I wanted it. Also, I was competitive. I was competitive as an athlete. But there were no huge obstacles I was facing other than I didn't have a hit. But I wasn't struggling. As a said, when I lived here I had tons of money for what I needed. When you're a kid and you're 21, 22, unless something's really gone wrong in your life, you're pretty happy.

When you say you were competitive, was it convenient then that Art wasn't the songwriter? I didn't think of it that way. I was best friends with Artie. He wasn't competitive with me. We were signed together. I really thought of us as a duo, and as a group, and that was fine. The Beatles were a group. But I do remember thinking, when *Sgt Pepper* came out, 'I can't believe that somebody is so much better than I am, that they are so far ahead.' But anyway, whatever. Artie and I were fine until *Bridge Over Troubled Water* and the movies. We were fine. The movies broke up Simon & Garfunkel, really. But we would have broken up anyway because Artie thrives on big ballads and I like to write rhythm and Artie doesn't like to sing rhythm. The thought of having to write a "Bridge Over Troubled Water" every album is too daunting, given what happened with "Bridge Over Troubled Water". Anyway, I wanted to go to Jamaica and record ska, all kinds of stuff that I wanted to do that he didn't have any interest in doing. So he went his way and sang the songs that he wanted to sing and I began doing what I like to do. It would have happened anyway because that's who we were musically. Then a couple of times when we came back together, some of it was lousy and some of it was nice.

> **"When *Sgt Pepper* came out, I couldn't believe someone was so far ahead"**
>
> **Paul Simon**

Which were the nice ones? When the Everly Brothers were there, we had a great time. I think it was 2003. We did another, after that. But that wasn't fun. Anyway. As it turns out, I had a lot on my mind, musically. As it turns out. I didn't set out saying, "I have a lot that I want to accomplish." It just grew as I went from stage to stage. Albums would take leaps. Like "Still Crazy After All These Years" was a leap. It was harmonically way better than what I had written before. It was a really good ballad with a really good title. I loved recording with the gospel quartets. I like going to Jamaica. I like travelling around and meeting other musicians. So the idea of recording in South Africa for *Graceland* didn't seem intimidating. It felt like, "Well, I did it in Jamaica. I don't know what it'll be like, but it'll be something akin to Jamaica." Which it wasn't.

Talking of *Graceland*, how do you view the controversy surrounding the album now? You were accused of breaking a cultural boycott. I don't regret it. I didn't start it. Look, first of all, that existed in Britain to a far greater degree than it existed elsewhere in the world, with the exception of South Africa. But in South Africa, the musicians answer was, "Hey, I don't want to hear your criticism. I'm out there in the world, you know, playing our music and doing well. So who are you?" Finally the argument came down to, "We, the African National Congress, didn't approve of you going to South Africa." It wasn't about a cultural boycott. There was no boycott that applied to recording with South African musicians. It applied to performing in front of segregated audiences or sporting events or political events. But it didn't apply to recording. Probably because it never occurred to them that anybody was going to do it, although the year before Malcolm McLaren had recorded *Duck Rock* in South Africa. The musicians voted whether they wanted me to come and they wanted to know how much I was going to pay them, because Malcolm McLaren didn't pay them anything and he took credit. I paid them double New York scale, which was something like $600 a session, and they were only making $10 a session. So they were happy to come in and play. So the whole experience of making that record was very exciting and very pleasurable for everybody. Nothing bad happened until it was a hit.



Paul Simon in 2016: "I was competitive"

MYRNA SUAREZ

So what changed? The political issue and implications came up. I was friends with Hugh Masakela and Miriam Makeba who stood by my side and said, "Who do you people think you are, attacking this? What did you ever do for South Africa?" So what it turned out to be really was an argument that said the politicians should be able to dictate to the artists what they can and what they can't do and the artists spoke back and said, "Why? How come you get to tell us that we can't do this? Based on what? How did you decide that we're doing damage to your cause when in fact we're actually doing good and you guys are upset because we're not listening to you? Is that the kind of government that you're going to bring when you come in?" So it became a real artist versus politics argument and I'm quite proud that we won.

You mentioned the subject of accomplishment a moment ago. Is there anything left for you to accomplish, do you think? I don't think accomplish is the right word. Is there anything left to learn? It's infinity. There's so much to learn that you're never going to get there. Which is part of the great pleasure of it. ●

RELEASED: 07 SEPTEMBER | **2018**

In The Blue Light

Simon the perfectionist reimagines some pertinent deeper cuts in jazz, chamber blues and minimalist tones. BY JOHN LEWIS

IF you're a recording artist, it's likely that you have a problematic relationship with your back catalogue. Those hit songs that you wrote when you were in your teens or your twenties might become an albatross around your neck, something preventing you from moving on and exploring new territory, and it can sometimes take decades to come to terms with the fact that these are your legacy.

Since the millennium, a clutch of albums – Joni Mitchell's *Travelogue* (2002), Kate Bush's *Director's Cut* (2011), Peter Gabriel's *New Blood* (2011), Bryan Ferry's *The Jazz Age* (2012) – have seen big stars revisiting their back catalogue in an unorthodox way, often ignoring the hits and choosing the deep cuts. *In The Blue Light* is Paul Simon's contribution to this micro-genre. Interestingly, the songs he has chosen to revisit here are not the big-ticket tunes – no "Still Crazy After All These Years", no "Mother And Child Reunion", no "Fifty Ways To Leave Your Lover", and nothing from his biggest-selling album, *Graceland*. Instead he takes 10 quite obscure album tracks from the past 45 years – from 1973's *There Goes Rhymin' Simon* all the way up to 2011's *So Beautiful Or So What* – and recontextualises them. "They're refreshed," he says, "like a new coat of paint on the walls of an old family home."

Unlike, say, Joni Mitchell or Kate Bush, Simon's voice hasn't changed radically over the last half-century. It's still the same gentle, pliant tenor, laced with speech-song. He's not looking back with anger, or even with regret – he's looking back as the fussy perfectionist, trying to repaint things that he felt he didn't quite nail the first time round. A more complex function also emerges – that of finding a contemporary resonance for old lyrics. On the Homeward Bound Tour that preceded this album – a tour that was billed as his final one, after nearly 60 years of performing – Simon had been reviving as an encore "American Tune", his poignant meditation on national identity written after Richard Nixon's 1972 electoral landslide ("my sore-loser song", as he described it); the references to souls battered and dreams shattered now takes on a very new relevance in the Trump era.

Throughout *In The Blue Light* there are similar lyrics here that seem to strike a latter-day relevance: the reference to the sights "*that brought tears to their immigrant eyes*" in "Rene And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War"; the Latin émigré's voyage in "The Teacher"; the coded references to racial profiling in "Pigs, Sheep And Wolves"; the ecological concerns raised in "Questions For The Angels".

As with the aforementioned albums by Mitchell, Gabriel et al, Simon chooses gentrified settings, relying on the accompaniment of the hip New York string section yMusic and a dozen high-end jazz musicians. Simon has often worked with expensive jazzers – a quick flick through his classic '70s and '80s LPs and you'll see names like Bob James, David Sanborn, Jon Faddis and the Brecker Brothers recurring. However, where these names were previously used to provide high-end studio polish – turning his folksy, inward-looking Manhattan meditations into expansive West Coast yacht rock – here their function is to provide languor and depth, particularly to songs that make more sense coming from a world-weary 76-year-old Paul Simon rather than a 30-something one.

The philosophical self-pity of "Some Folks' Lives Roll Easy" was, on 1975's *Still Crazy After All These Years*, an easy-going AOR ballad; here it's transformed into a complex jazz fugue, with accompanist du jour Sullivan Fortner providing an intense piano backing and Joe Lovano laying down a melodically complex tenor sax solo. "One Man's Ceiling Is Another Man's Floor" was, in the 1973 original, a good-natured shuffle; here it's slowed down to a funereal blues that seems to emphasise the lyric's hidden, unspoken narrative about domestic violence. On 1980's *One Trick Pony*, "How The Heart Approaches What It Yearns" is

a slick Laurel Canyon rock ballad in 6/8; here it's transformed into a jazz standard, with pianist Fortner and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis featuring in an all-star quintet. It rather suits the song's despondent air.

Another function of these versions is to "de-Africanise" certain songs; uncovering the melodies that got lost behind the feverish rhythmic complexity of Simon's post-*Graceland* settings. "Pigs, Sheep And Wolves", a delicate piece of township jive on 2000's *You're The One*, is turned into a full-on New Orleans riot, with Marsalis arranging a rambunctious Dixieland band. For the first time you can hear the Randy Newman-ish satire of the lyric shine through effectively. Likewise, on 1990's *Rhythm Of The Saints*, "Can't Run But" was a marimba epic about the paradoxes of development; here it's turned into a neurotic piece of Philip Glass-style minimalism, arranged by Bryce Dressner from The National. (Simon has also tweaked the lyrics for the 21st century, inserting a reference to a DJ whose "*sub-bass feels like an earthquake*"). The devilishly complicated Afro-Cuban drums have also been removed from "The Teacher", so that Simon's voice is now just accompanied by the twin guitars of Brazilian brothers Sérgio and Odair Assad.

The centrepiece of the album might be "Darling Lorraine" – on *You're The One* this lengthy, episodic story of a marriage, from flirtation to widowhood, often seems to be hidden behind a wall of West African thumb pianos and jittery percussion. Here the story is given space to breathe, all brushed drums and the wobbly guitars of Bill Frisell. Indeed, throughout the album, Frisell's guitar seems to suit Simon's lyrics perfectly; his twangy tremolo ekeing even more emotion from "Love", and adding a woozy, dreamlike quality to "Questions For The Angels".

Another song massively improved by these settings is "Rene And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War". On 1983's *Hearts And Bones* it's an odd 6/8 ballad set to a bubblegum rock'n'roll backing; here the rather self-conscious doo-wop vocals are removed and replaced by fluttering woodwind and sighing cellos that help to tug at the heart strings. Weirdly, it's actually closer to the unaccompanied guitar-and-voice demo version that showed up on a 2010 reissue of the LP – which suggests that this is how Paul Simon originally envisaged the song when he wrote it. *In The Blue Light* might thus be a rather tardy way of realising his first thought may have been his best one. ●

> For the first time you can hear the Newman-like satire

SLEEVENOTES | In The Blue Light

1. One Man's Ceiling Is Another Man's Floor ★★★
2. Love ★★
3. Can't Run But ★★★★
4. How The Heart Approaches What It Yearns ★★★
5. Pigs, Sheep And Wolves ★★★★
6. René And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War ★★★★
7. The Teacher ★★★
8. Darling Lorraine ★★★
9. Some Folks' Lives Roll Easy ★★★
10. Questions For The Angels ★★★★

Label: Legacy
Produced by: Paul Simon, Roy Halee
Recorded at: various studios, in 2017–18, including Avatar Studios, Power Station, Sear Sound, New York

Personnel incl: Paul Simon (vocals, guitars, bass harmonica, percussion), Sullivan Fortner (piano, harmonium), Bill Frisell (gtr), John Wenhardt (piano), John Patitucci (double bass), Renaud Garcia-Fons (bass), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), Dan Block (clarinet), Steve Gadd, Nate Smith (drums)
Highest chart position: UK 10; US 70

RELEASED: 1967 – 2012

Live and Compilations

Successive compilers struggle to fit the classics on one disc, while live sets sparkle, featuring the birth of "Bridge…" BY PETER WATTS

WHEN Columbia released the first proper Simon & Garfunkel compilation, **Simon & Garfunkel's Greatest Hits** COLUMBIA, 1972 ★★★★★, the timing was fortuitous and the packaging was perfect. It looked exactly like a Simon & Garfunkel studio album and rounded up classic singles and album tracks, some of which came in the form of unreleased live tracks from 1969/1970 – "The 59th Street Bridge Song", "Homeward Bound", "For Emily, Whenever I May Find Her" and "Kathy's Song". It came out after S&G had played a one-off reunion at Madison Square Garden to support presidential candidate George McGovern. That show created sufficient buzz to propel *Greatest Hits* into the charts, and it remains a best-seller today.

Some of the live tracks came from concerts that were more recently released in their entirety. There were a pair from **Live 1969** COLUMBIA, 2008 ★★★★★, which caught Simon & Garfunkel on their final North American tour accompanied by a truly exceptional band – Dylan sideman Fred Carter Jnr on guitar backed by Wrecking Crew trio Larry Knechtel, Joe Osborn and Hal Blaine. After the success of "Mrs Robinson" and *Bookends*, this is a more confident pair, with a little of the youthful hope knocked off. The most powerful moments come with the secular spirituals of "The Boxer", "I Am A Rock" and "A Bridge Over Troubled Water", the latter introduced slightly apologetically as a new song, which on completion elicits a goosebump-raising standing ovation by an audience aware they have witnessed the birth of something extraordinary.

Before that came **Live From New York City, 1967** COLUMBIA, 2002 ★★★★, recorded on a crisp New York January evening at the Lincoln Center. This time the pair are unaccompanied and the album has a purity that seems to reflect the optimism of an era before the cultural clash of the Summer Of Love and the bad trip of 1968. Politics opens the set with "He Was My Brother" and later comes "A Church Is Burning", but the highlights are the personal politics of "The Dangling Conversation", "Richard Cory" and "The Sound Of Silence". There are also rarities like "You Don't Know Where Your Interest Lies" and a cover of Davey Graham's "Anji", while Garfunkel's delivery of "For Emily, Whenever I May Find Her" is perfection.

A concert also inspired the second proper Simon & Garfunkel compilation – we are effectively ignoring Tom & Jerry knock-off **The Hit Sounds Of Simon And Garfunkel** PICKWICK, 1967 ★★ and the best-selling but largely unnecessary soundtrack for **The Graduate** COLUMBIA, 1968 ★★★ with two not-quite-finished versions of "Mrs Robinson". **The Simon & Garfunkel Collection: 17 Of Their All-Time Greatest Recordings** COLUMBIA, 1981 ★★★ came out around the same time as the big Central Park reunion concert and had heavy overlap with *Greatest Hits*, adding a few album tracks to the story – "Wednesday Morning, 3AM", "Keep The Customer Satisfied", "Song For The Asking" plus fab singles "At The Zoo" and "Hazy Shade Of Winter". There's nothing much wrong with it other than that it's not strictly necessary and the cover is a bit naff. Columbia also reissued the five studio albums in a single box called *Collected Works*, which came out on CD in 1990.

CD (and cassette) was the chosen format for the next compilation, originally released in Australia and New Zealand. **20 Greatest Hits** SONY, 1991 ★★★★ uses the extended running time to add to the now-standard canon with "Cloudy" and "We've Got A Groovy Thing Goin'" and slow-burning gems "The Dangling Conversation" and "Old Friends". It was followed with unseemly haste by **The Definitive Simon & Garfunkel** COLUMBIA, 1992 ★★★★★, another 20-track release that shuffled the pack, adding slightly bizarrely "Seven O'Clock News/Silent Night" as well as the Central Park '81 renditions of "Kathy's Song" and "For Emily, Whenever I May Find Her".

Next out the gate was **Old Friends** COLUMBIA, 1997 ★★★, a 3CD offering containing a mix of rarities, favourite tracks and previously unreleased outtakes like the 1964 demo of "Bleecker Street", a cover of Jackson C Frank's magnificent "Blues Run The Game" and a couple of Christmas tracks ("Comfort & Joy"/"Star Carol"). There were also several live tracks – a number of which were later released on the 1967 and 1969 live albums mentioned above – and the 1975 one-off reunion single "My Little Town". The box occupies slightly uncomfortable conceptual territory in that it is neither truly definitive nor broad enough for casual listeners, but that's not to detract from the quality of the content. You're still best off with **The Columbia Studio Recordings (1964–1970)** COLUMBIA 2001 ★★★★★. This has all the studio albums, remastered properly, plus a select range of rarities, B-sides, demos and alternate takes.

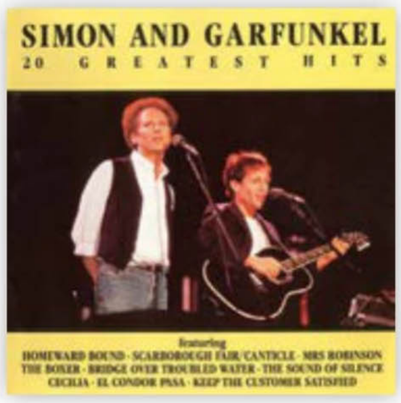
THE Best Of Simon & Garfunkel COLUMBIA, 1999 ★★★ was yet another 20-track single-disc selection of everything you might expect, with the introduction of "The Only Living Boy In New York" by way of variety.

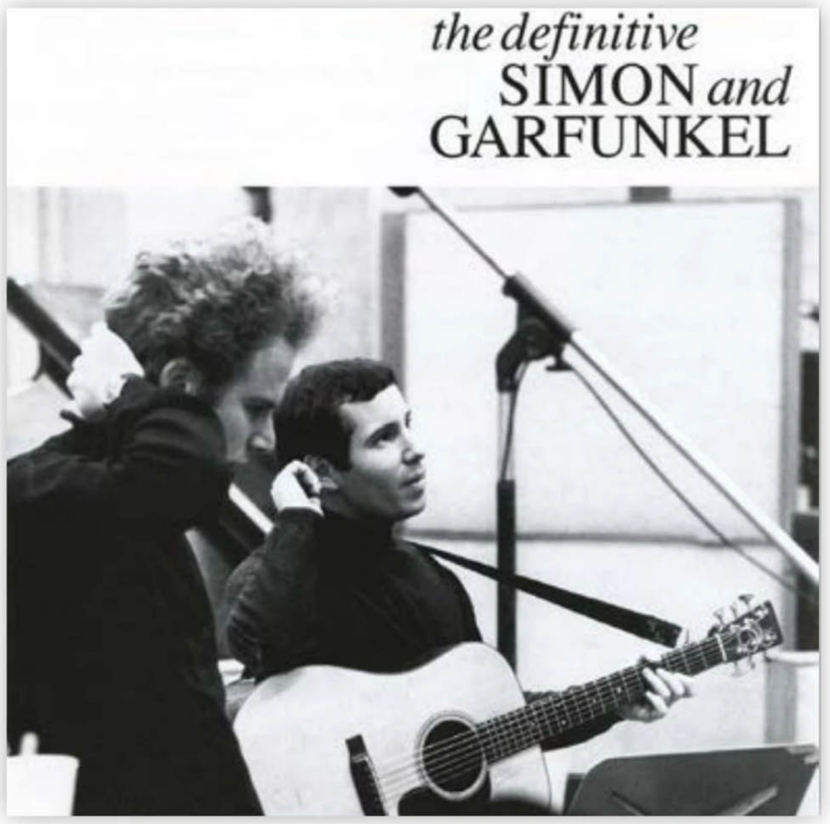
CRITICS' VERDICTS

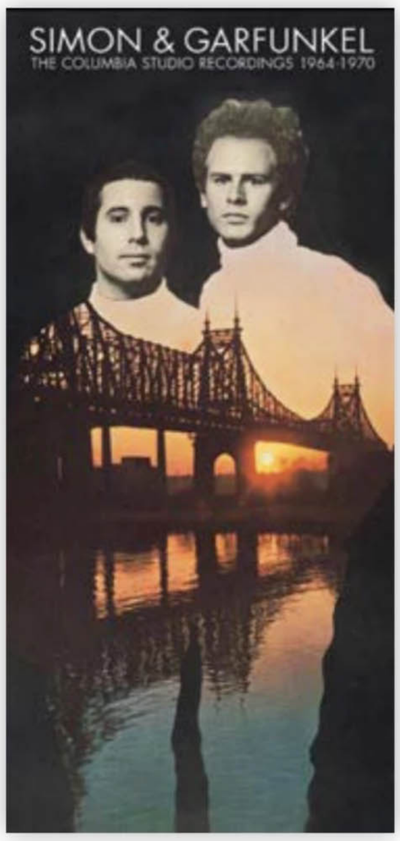
SIMON & GARFUNKEL GREATEST HITS

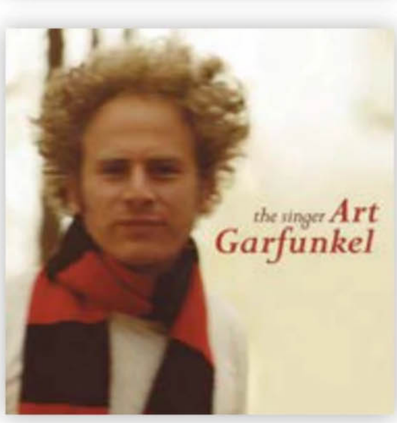
"If there's any one album that can equal, never mind surpass, the phenomenal chart success of *Bridge Over Troubled Water* it's this superb collection of 14 of the duo's finest moments... For once, an album that justifies the *Greatest Hits* title."

Roy Carr, NME, July 15, 1972





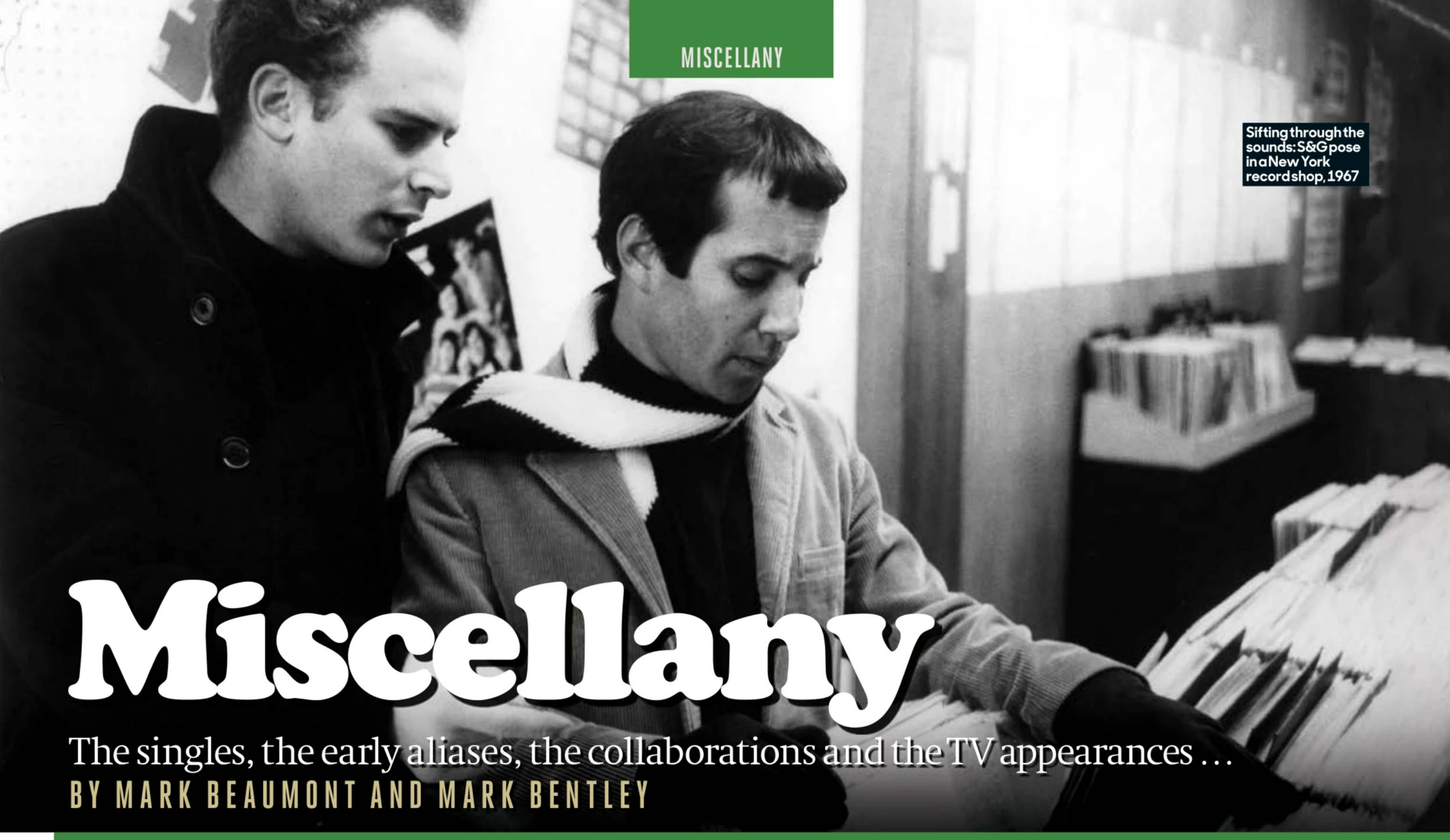




After all those single-disc compilations, **Tales From New York: The Very Best Of Simon And Garfunkel** COLUMBIA, 2000 ★★★★ finally expands the back catalogue over a more satisfying two discs. It's good, but **The Essential Simon & Garfunkel** COLUMBIA, 2003 ★★★★★, again over two discs, is better, with a more satisfying combination of live and studio recordings that seems to echo the original appeal of *Greatest Hits*. It should be the last word, but we won't ignore **America: The Simon & Garfunkel Collection** COLUMBIA, 2008 ★★ even if we think you should. This has a curious track selection – it must be the only Simon & Garfunkel comp to omit both "The Sound Of Silence" and "Mrs Robinson" – and an awful cover.

2003's *The Essential* echoes the original appeal of *Greatest Hits*

There are also compilations for the individual performers. **The Singer** COLUMBIA, 2012 ★★★★ is the best for Art, featuring solo recordings, guest appearances and several Simon & Garfunkel tracks. It's a lovely showcase of Art's vocal talents, sensibly presented in non-chronological order to even out the brilliance. It was the companion to **Songwriter** COLUMBIA, 2011 ★★★, which did the same less successfully for Paul Simon, with one entire CD focused on material since 1990 meaning some classic older material doesn't get a look in. For more general fans, **The Essential Paul Simon** WARNER BROS, 2007 ★★★★ is very good at rounding up a substantial selection of Simon's best post-1970 solo material, including a huge chunk of *Graceland*. ●



Sifting through the sounds: S&G pose in a New York record shop, 1967

Miscellany

The singles, the early aliases, the collaborations and the TV appearances . . .

BY MARK BEAUMONT AND MARK BENTLEY

CHARTWORD BOUND

"SILENCE" PROVES GOLDEN... THE SIMON & GARFUNKEL SINGLES STORY

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

COLUMBIA, 1965

Highest chart position: UK – ; US 1

Simon & Garfunkel "go electric". Sales of their folky 1964 debut album *Wednesday Morning, 3AM* were so slow that the pair decided to split before they'd even really begun. When a regional distributor noticed that "Sounds" (later rechristened "Sound") was the LP's popular radio tune, producer Tom Wilson futureproofed it with Dylanesque guitar and rock drums – and released it as a single. Judas! Actually no. Thanks – really good idea.

HOMEWARD BOUND

COLUMBIA, 1966

Highest chart position: UK 9; US 5

The gig was in the north-west of England. Paul Simon's girlfriend Kathy Chitty – yes *that* Kathy – remained in London. En route back from Liverpool, at Widnes station in 1965 (as the plaque there states) Paul Simon wrote "Homeward Bound". Big in the UK, despite lack of Widnes-specific reference, it was a monster in the US, Holland, South Africa and New Zealand.

I AM A ROCK

COLUMBIA, 1966

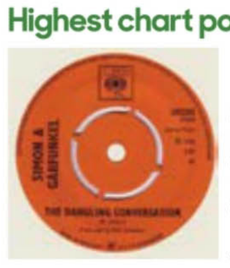
Highest chart position: UK 17; US 3

Originally released on *The Paul Simon Song Book*, this ode to isolation was re-recorded for *Sounds Of Silence* in Wilson's electric mould, using several of the same players who had recorded Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited*.

THE DANGLING CONVERSATION

COLUMBIA, 1966

Highest chart position: US 25; UK –



"A college kid's song", according to Simon. The second single from *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme* failed to cross over to the chart masses but worked as an artful pastoral portrait of an intellectual relationship run dry.

A HAZY SHADE OF WINTER

COLUMBIA, 1966

Highest chart position: US 13; UK –

Adopting a soul beat and Love's psych-rock tones, S&G revived their chart fortunes with a lively rock tale of an unsuccessful poet watching the seasons of his life ebb away. Didn't do much in the UK until covered by The Bangles in 1987.

AT THE ZOO

COLUMBIA, 1967

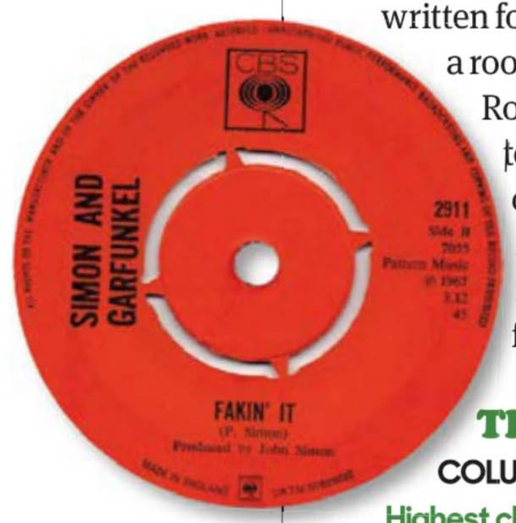
Highest chart position: US 16; UK –

Written to accompany the zoo scene of *The Graduate*, but not used. "At The Zoo" found S&G skipping around the cages anthropomorphising sceptical orangutans, secret pigeons and reactionary zebras. Of course you put this on the A-side, and not "Feelin' Groovy"!

FAKIN' IT

COLUMBIA, 1967

Highest chart position: US 23; UK –



Often considered an allegory for Simon's relationship with Garfunkel. This *Bookends* brooder was the result of Simon, in a "hashish reverie", imagining what sort of life he might have had as a 19th-century Hungarian tailor.

SCARBOROUGH FAIR/ CANTICLE

COLUMBIA, 1968

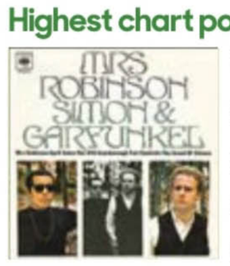
Highest chart position: US 11; UK –

And so to merry middle England, for a song Simon learned from his landlord, Martin Carthy. "Canticle" was reworked from a 1963 Simon composition "The Side Of A Hill".

MRS ROBINSON

COLUMBIA, 1968

Highest chart position: US 1; UK 4



Were S&G trying to seduce the charts? If so, it worked. This euphoric folk-pop ode to the older lady, written for *The Graduate* from a root piece called "Mrs Roosevelt" and destined to top the Billboard chart, became synonymous with the film, if not the entire free love era.

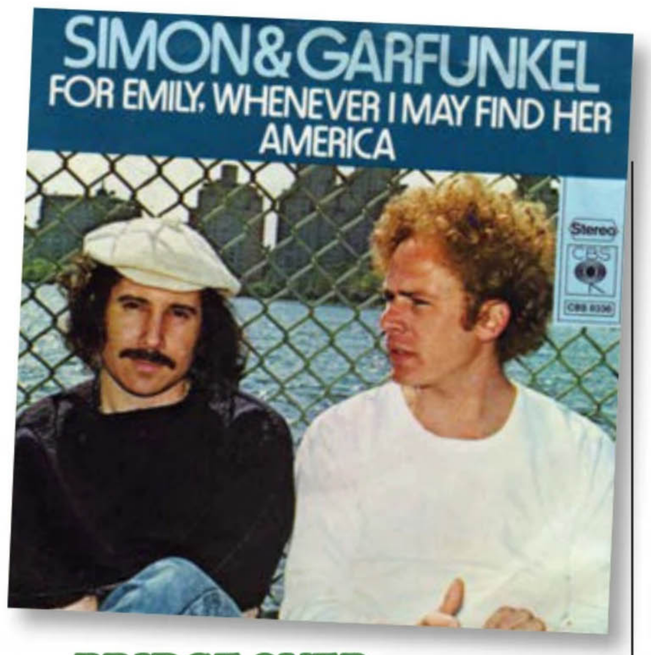
THE BOXER

COLUMBIA, 1969

Highest chart position: US 7; UK 6

The lead single from *Bridge...*, Simon's delicate pastoral sketch of a blue-collar New York struggler was originally believed to be about Bob Dylan, but Simon later admitted to its autobiographical nature.

OLUMBIA RECORDS/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER

COLUMBIA, 1970

Highest chart position: US 1; UK 1

The signature song and a US No 1 for six weeks, like its parent album "Bridge..." was a monster seller, shifting six million copies to a world that clearly needed gospelised support. The "*silver girl*" of the final verse was Simon's then wife Peggy Harper and not, as rumoured, a drug addict.

CECILIA

COLUMBIA, 1970

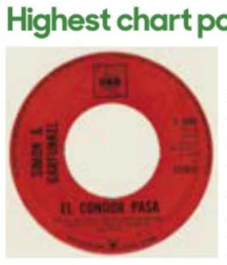
Highest chart position: US 4; UK –

Built around the sound of Simon, Garfunkel and friends bashing a piano bench at a late-night party and dedicated to the Catholic patron saint of music, "Cecilia" is either a love song to the most unreliable of partners or a note of surrender to Mistress Song. Also a cautionary tale of the dangers of getting up and washing your face after sex.

EL CONDOR PASA (IF I COULD)

COLUMBIA, 1970

Highest chart position: US 18; UK –



Writing English lyrics to a melody he'd first heard performed by Los Incas in Paris, Simon indulged in his first bout of world music. One of the friendliest court cases in rock history ensued as the original composer's son successfully asserted his father's credit on the song.

THE 59TH STREET BRIDGE SONG (FEELIN' GROOVY)

COLUMBIA, 1972

Highest chart position: US –; UK –

To plug the 1972 *Greatest Hits* album, the jazzy, swing-along B-side to "At The Zoo" was finally given overdue top billing. Named after New York's Queensboro Bridge, civil engineering fans.

FOR EMILY, WHEREVER I MAY FIND HER (LIVE)

COLUMBIA, 1972

Highest chart position: US 53; UK –

Previously the B-side to "A Hazy Shade Of Winter" and a key component of *Parsley, Sage...*, a live take of "For Emily..." recorded in St Louis in November 1969 became a minor chart success from the *Greatest Hits*.

AMERICA COLUMBIA, 1972

Highest chart position: US 97; UK 25

Also released to support the *Greatest Hits*, S&G's widescreen hitch-hike epic, inspired by a 1964 road trip Simon took with Kathy Chitty, took its rightful place at the heart of '70s Americana.

MY LITTLE TOWN

COLUMBIA, 1975

Highest chart position: US 9; UK –

A "nasty" semi-reunion song about growing up in a dead-end hometown that Simon wrote to help beef up Art's solo career, and ended up being used on both of their 1975 solo albums, *Breakaway* and *Still Crazy After All These Years*.

(WHAT A) WONDERFUL WORLD COLUMBIA, 1978

Highest chart position: US 17; UK –

An Art Garfunkel solo recording of Sam Cooke's evergreen classic that featured Simon and James Taylor alternating silky lead and backing vocals in duet.

WAKE UP LITTLE SUSIE

WARNER BROS, 1982

Highest chart position: US 27; UK –

Lifted from *The Concert In Central Park* in tribute to a major S&G influence in The Everly Brothers, this ebullient jangler returned the duo to the US Top 30 for the final time to date. ***MARK BEAUMONT***

TOM & JERRY, TRUE TAYLOR, JERRY LANDIS AND THE MYSTICS...

Inside the early Paul and Artie recordings

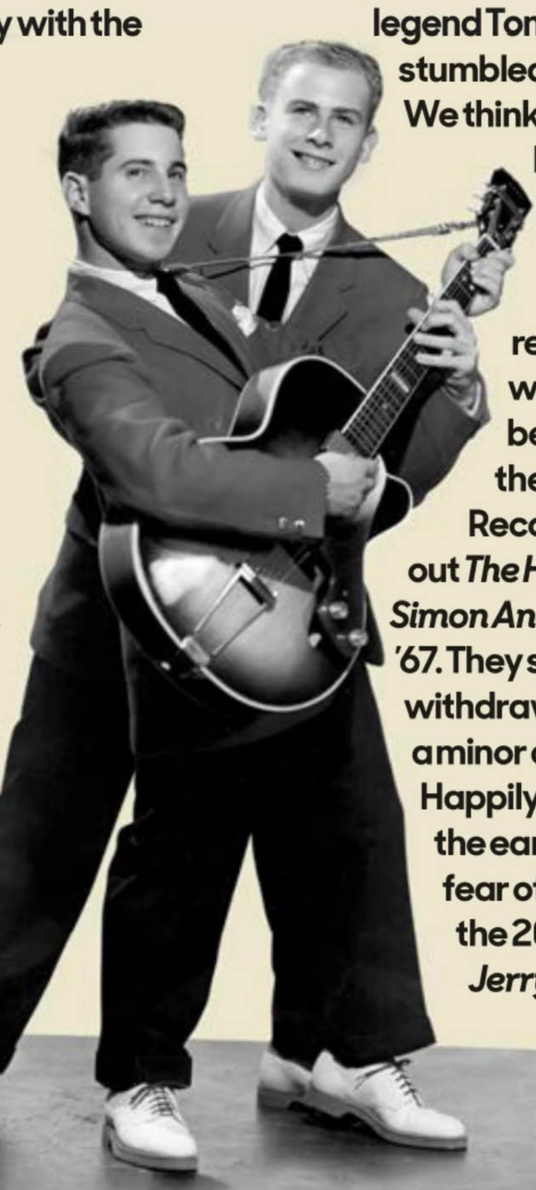
A DUO with one dominant, songwriting partner, but different ambitions, who would go their separate ways... The story of Tom & Jerry, S&G's teenage incarnation, sounds oddly familiar. "I never would have done it if Paul hadn't pulled me along," Garfunkel told Marc Eliot for *Paul Simon: A Life*. "I was too fearful of the competitive, adult world of rock'n'roll."

It was at Forest Hills High School in 1956 where the duo wrote their first song, "The Girl for Me"; Simon's astute father Lee apparently sent a copy to the Library of Congress to secure copyright. "Hey Schoolgirl" was the breakthrough, recorded for $25 at Sanders Recording Studio in Manhattan, and overheard by chance by promoter Sid Prosen, who bagged the 15-year-olds for his label Big Records. Artie became Tom Graph (because the future Columbia architecture student liked maths, natch) and Paul assumed the role of Jerry Landis (borrowing the surname from an ex-girlfriend).

"Hey Schoolgirl", aided by Big Records' facility with the DJ-bribing Payola system, became a radio hit, before reaching No 49 on the national Billboard charts in '57. The duo even made it onto Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*. Subsequent singles "Our Song", "That's My Story", and "Don't Say Goodbye" couldn't sustain the momentum; Big Records went under and the duo dissolved. Paul spent his half-share of "Hey Schoolgirl's" $4,000 winnings on a crimson Chevy Impala; Art saved his for college.

It didn't end there. Garfunkel cut more juvenilia – "Private World" for Octavia Records and "Beat Love" for Warwick Records, debuting the nom-de-plume Artie Garr. Simon, meanwhile, recorded a slew of singles as frontman and solo act, including, as True Taylor, "True Or False", with his dad on bass, and as pop Svengali himself, fronting Tico & The Mystics (later The Triumphs), who recorded Simon's songs "All Through the Night," "I Begin To Think Again Of You," and "Let Me Steal Your Heart Away"). Resuming the Jerry Landis brand, he formed an alliance with future Tin Pan Alley superstar Carole King. His early-'60s singles like "The Lone Teen Ranger" and "Motorcycle" are cute pastiches of the sounds of the day.

University intervened, and it wasn't until late '63 that Simon and Garfunkel (now Kane & Garr) would appear together at open-mic nights at Gerde's in NYC. This time it was Columbia Records legend Tom Wilson that stumbled across them. We think you know what happens next. Inevitably, these early recordings were swiftly repackaged when S&G's star began to rise. In the UK, Pickwick Records bashed out *The Hit Sounds Of Simon And Garfunkel* in '67. They sued, and it was withdrawn – creating a minor collectable. Happily, you can hear the early stuff with no fear of criminality on the 2002 comp *Tom & Jerry*. *MARK BENTLEY*



JAMES KRIEGSMANN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Show stopper: Simon on *The Muppet Show*

The Goggleboxer

Art's roles in "the films" were always said to be at the root of the Simon & Garfunkel split. But Paul Simon hasn't always been shy of the screen himself. Here are some of his best moments.

ANNIE HALL It's the gentleness that Simon brings to his walk-on role as LA record producer Tony Lacey that helps emphasise the character's sleaze. He purrs his request for Woody Allen's Alvy Singer and Diane Keaton's Annie (a club singer) to come back with his entourage to his hotel room where "it'll be very mellow". Simon fills his words with a soft, entitled arrogance reflecting the music industry's insidious side. See also his comment to Annie following her peformance: "it was very musical."

ALL YOU NEED IS CASH Simon reminisced fondly for this mockumentary, about the scenes of Rutlemania he witnessed while touring the Rutland folk clubs, about meeting the legends that were Dirk, Stig, Barry and Nasty and about the effect on his own music of the endless chord from *Sgt Rutter's Only Darts Club Band*. "Every ten years people say 'who will be the next Rutles?'. I don't think there will be a 'next Rutles'."

SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE Singing "Still Crazy After All These Years" dressed as a thanksgiving turkey might be Simon's most memorable moment on *SNL*, but his involvement with the iconic comedy show ran far deeper. Friendly with the show's creator Lorne Michaels, Simon appeared on the very first show, previewing his role as host on the second, when he played eight songs and reunited with Garfunkel for the first time since their split. It was the first of four hosting stints, and in 1977 Simon was even granted his own *SNL*-scripted Paul Simon Special.

THE MUPPETS Wandering through a Renaissance market scene as a lute-playing minstrel singing "Scarborough Fair", playing a song with Gonzo The Great about frying his own legs or performing "Loves Me Like A Rock" with a very green gospel choir, Paul Simon immersed himself in the world of furry frivolity on his own *Muppet Show* special in 1981.

ONE-TRICK PONY As a fading folk musician reduced to supporting the B-52's after a hit-free decade, Simon's starring, directing and script-writing cinematic debut felt like a self-fulfilling prophesy in 1980. Rip Torn, Joan Hackett, Michael Pearlman and Lou Reed (as hip producer Steve Kunellan) co-starred, soundtrack tune "Late In The Evening" hit the Billboard Top Ten, but the movie bombed nonetheless.

PORTLANDIA Simon stopped by Portlandia to promote his fictional autobiography *You Can Call Me Paul*, only to face hipster couple Kath and Dave (Carrie Brownstein and Fred Armisen) who are determined to impress him with their knowledge. Alas, when they finally address the great man, Dave mumbles a question that would baffle the most jargon-inclined musicologist: "We had heard... I had heard a folk singer, and his vocalisations didn't have the discerning quality, tonality... I think you and I seem like we're the same type of musically trained judges of how people sing. Do you find your discerning ear to criticise, or at least assess, that type of vocalisation or is that just us?" Naturally, Simon has zero clue what he's talking about.

WELCOME TO SWEDEN Following guest appearances by the likes of Bjorn Ulvaeus and Jack Black, Simon made a cameo in comedian Greg Poehler's sitcom about an American accountant quitting his job to move to his girlfriend's home country of Sweden. Paul's spot was in the fifth episode of season two... unfortunately the season was cancelled after episode four due to what Poehler described as "craptastically low ratings".

MARK BEAUMONT

EVERETT COLLECTION INC. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

YOU CAN CALL ME, PAL

PAUL AND ARTIE'S 20 MOST INTRIGUING/ WEIRD GUEST SPOTS

WITH... PETER GABRIEL
I'LL SCRATCH YOURS 2013

A concept in collaboration, *I'll Scratch Yours* forms a twinset with Gabriel's 2010 covers album *Scratch My Back*. It gave the artists he'd honoured – including Arcade Fire, Bon Iver, Lou Reed, and Elbow – the chance to return the favour.

Gabriel had a go at "The Boy In The Bubble". Paul reciprocated with album closer "Biko".

WITH... JIMMY WEBB
THE ANIMALS' CHRISTMAS 1985

Co-credited to Garfunkel and Christian chanteuse Amy Grant, this Webb-penned Christmas concept album tells the story of Christ's nativity – from the vantage point of the animals who were there.

Produced by Beatles knob-twiddler Geoff Emerick, it also features the London Symphony Orchestra.

WITH... CARL PERKINS
GO CAT GO! 1996

Joined by Johnny Cash, Ringo Starr, Willie Nelson and Paul McCartney, Simon was one of a star cast recording "new" material with the rock'n'roll hero for this souvenir tribute album.

Must hear: Paul and Carl rip up "Rockabilly Music" and "A Mile Out Of Memphis" as a duo.

WITH... VAN DYKE PARKS
MOTHER GOOSE ROCK 'N' RHYME 1990

Utterly bonkers. This Disney Channel kiddies musical – based around the nursery rhyme – was scored by Parks, led by Shelley Duval and featured Bobby Brown, Debbie Harry, ZZ Top, and Little Richard.

It's an S&G twofer: who could forget Artie as Georgie Porgie, and Paul Simon as, er, Simple Simon?

WITH... LOUIS CK AND STEVE BUSCEMI HORACE & PETE SOUNDTRACK 2016

Cheers' hellish twin. This online comedy focuses on two brothers (Louis CK and Buscemi) running a down-at-heel bar in Brooklyn, staffed by Alan Alda and frequented by seriously skanky clientele.

Simon provides the original theme tune, heard in snippet form. As he

Paul Simon with George Harrison on *Saturday Night Live*, 1976

sings: "*I just need some time to think/Or maybe I just need a drink/ At Horace & Pete's.*"

WITH MAIA SHARP & BUDDY MONDLOCK
EVERYTHING WAITS TO BE NOTICED 2002

A whole album of Garfunkel collaborations, perhaps surprisingly released on legendary jazz label Blue Note.

Produced by hitmaker Billy Mann, this "trio" record uniquely features Garfunkel as co-writer on six songs, blending his unmistakable pipes with these classy country-poppers.

WITH... WYCLEF JEAN
CARNIVAL VOL II...MEMOIRS OF AN IMMIGRANT 2007

In this conceptual sequel to the former Fugee's first solo joint, Wyclef stir-fries hip-hop, reggae and found sounds in celebration of the US melting-pot culture.

Simon features on (and co-writes) "Fast Car" – and stands out just a little next to other guest artistes including Ti, Mary J Blige, Lil Wayne and Shakira.

WITH... JAMES TAYLOR
UP TIL NOW 1993

Taylor's a mutual friend of S&G, and has worked with Garfunkel many a time, including on 1977 solo album *Watermark*.

Their duet of the Carole King classic "Crying In The Rain" turned up on this magpie-like career-spanning compilation, which also features the aforementioned Jimmy Webb, and much referencing of Art's time with S&G.

WITH... MUMFORD AND SONS JERRY DOUGLAS, TRAVELER 2012

Lap steel/guitar legend Jerry Douglas has a meaty little black book: Clapton, Dr John and bandmates Alison Krauss and Union Station feature on this genuinely excellent record.

And who's that delivering a shining version of "The Boxer"? None other than West London folksters Mumford and Sons, supplemented by Simon himself.

WITH... BRETT AND JERMAINE! FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS 2009

In Season 2, Episode 7 ("The President") Art pops up as Art Garfunkel. He's the punchline in a suitably improbable plot featuring The PM of New Zealand, and a hot date with a kooky girl who insists Brett dress up as Garfunkel for sex. Check out the Paul Simon musical references, too...

WITH... THE SOCIAL EXPERIMENT ONLINE 2016

The Social Experiment is the ultimate hip-hop collaboration concept; mainstays Nate Fox and Nico Segal (alongside Chance The Rapper) are renowned for their boundary-pushing exercises.

Paul Simon sanctioned an ambitious remix of two *Stranger To Stranger* tracks. "The Clock" and "The Werewolf" are here remoulded into looming, beat-heavy adventures in sound.

WITH... ARTHUR 1998

First airing in the mid-'90s, the long-running educational Canadian/ American TV show *Arthur* is still a firm favourite – for its four-to-eight-year-old demographic.

Few may be aware that "The Ballad of Buster Baxter" (Episode 51) features one Art Garfunkel as a singing, guitar-playing moose.

WITH... RANDY NEWMAN
TROUBLE IN PARADISE 1983

Inevitable that two of America's greatest story-telling songwriters should work together. Newman's early-'80s albums aren't his best known, perhaps, but this one did contain earworm hit "I Love LA".

The highlight? Could it be "The Blues" a jaunty-yet-wistful duet, with Paul's clear-cut vocals soaring over proceedings?

WITH... EACH OTHER 1975

Not as duh as it sounds actually. When Simon first hosted *Saturday Night Live* in October 1975, the show featured Art, alongside *Still Crazy*-era collaborator, the magnificent Phoebe Snow. Both artists are co-credited of course on '75 singles "My Little Town" and "Gone At Last". So now you see.

WITH... JACK NICHOLSON
AS GOOD AS IT GETS OST 1997

Tucked away on the soundtrack of Nicholson's Oscar-winning *As Good As It Gets* is Garfunkel's full version of the Monty Python anthem "Always Look On The Bright Side of Life", which Jack sings briefly in the movie.

Ever sensitive, Art changed the lyrics from "Life's a piece of shit" to "Life's a counterfeit".

WITH... GEORGE HARRISON
SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE 1976

A genuine fan favourite, this. On his second slot as *SNL* host, Simon roped in the Dark Horse himself.

George and Paul performed two songs: "Here Comes The Sun" and "Homeward Bound". The latter is a delicious acoustic rendering, with gorgeous, happy harmonising vocals. Just a shame about Paul's tank top, eh?

WITH... HANS ZIMMER
A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN OST 1993

Garfunkel's apparently a big baseball fan – the Phillies, since you ask.

His version of the Hoagy Carmichael classic "Two Sleepy People" appears on the soundtrack album to the Madonna-starring *A League Of Their Own*, a charming piece of hokum about the wartime women's baseball league, and scored by the superstar composer.

WITH... EDIE BRICKELL
"YOU'RE THE REASON OUR KIDS ARE UGLY" LIVE 2012

Simon met his third wife on the set of *SNL* in '88, and they've performed together countless times through the years.

If you want an online chuckle, this is the place to go. The couple (who have three kids), knocked out the Loretta Lynn/Conway Twitty country classic at Radio City, NYC. And yes, that's Steve Martin on banjo!

WITH... STEPHEN COLBERT
THE LATE SHOW 2015

For his show premiere, Colbert thought he'd whistle a little, specifically the solo on "Me And Julio...", backed by low-rent S&G tribute act Troubled Waters.

The skit – and it is funny, in a showbizzy way – is that this was Simon himself. Colbert even gets the great man to say "Paul Simon is a bit of jerk" as a bonus gag.

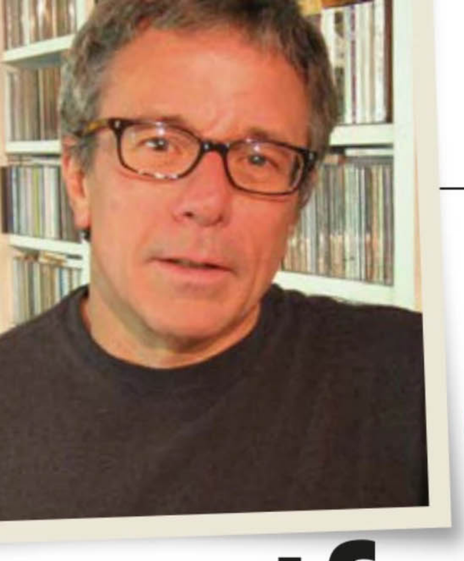
The Roots and Art on *Jimmy Fallon*, 2015

WITH... THE ROOTS THE JIMMY FALLON SHOW 2015

Hip-hop royalty ?uestlove and "Captain" Kirk Douglas had a long-running "Black Simon & Garfunkel" sketch on *The Jimmy Fallon Show*, sending up hits in a '60s folk stylee.

Art turned up to perform The Weeknd's monster choon "Can't Feel My Face". Altogether now: "*I can't feel my face when I'm with you/But I love it, but I love it, oh...*" **MARK BENTLEY**

RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS



Stop Me ...if you've heard this one before

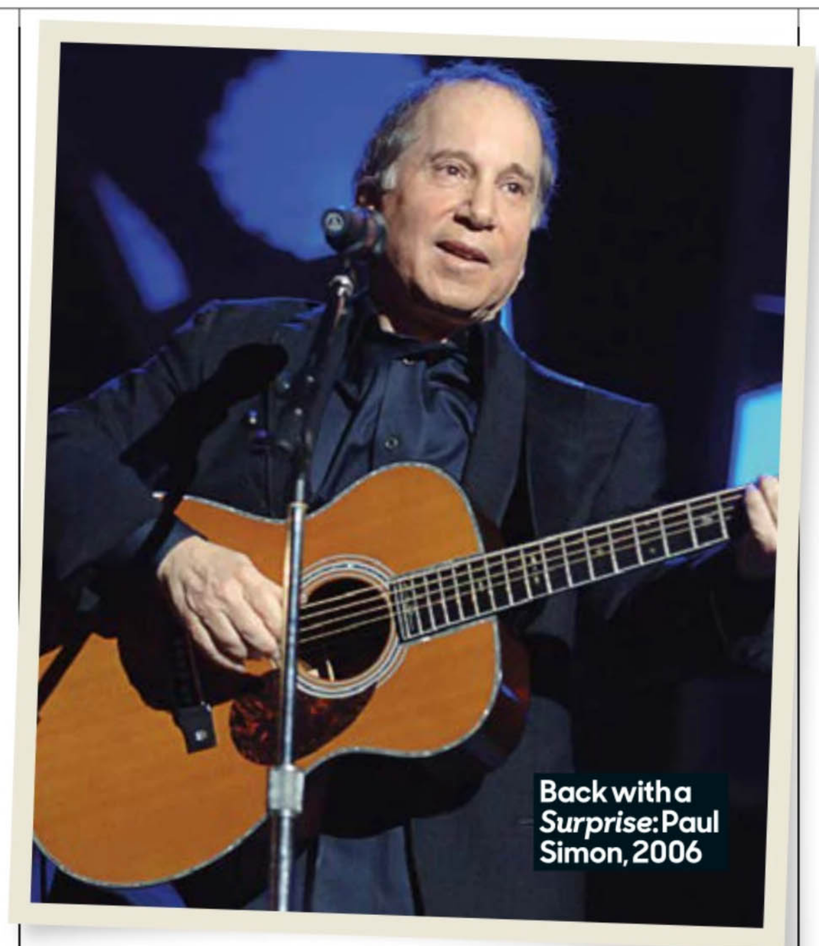
BUD SCOPPA crosses paths with a master still at work a half-century into an epic musical journey. "I never try to be obscure…"

I WROTE the liner notes for the 2002 reissues of the Simon & Garfunkel albums without so much as a word from Paul Simon, who apparently felt no need to embellish the familiar narrative. But four years later, the notoriously press-shy Simon would break his silence, as he'd occasionally done post-*Graceland* after making an album he felt the need to explain. What prompted him to speak up was the release of his 2006 album, *Surprise*. A collaboration with Brian Eno, it was set in a world much changed since his past classics; it was his first post-9/11 LP, and it was an attempt to speak in the language of his once-massive fanbase, following a series of post-*Graceland* albums whose message, he believed, had been lost in translation.

"I resist being obvious, but I really never try to be obscure", he told me. "And when I find that something that I've done isn't easily understood, then I try to figure out how to clarify it without sacrificing what it is that I was fascinated with. I never really intended to be a person who only dwelled in other cultures. When I went off with *Graceland*, that was because I was really taken by what I heard in South African music. *Rhythm Of The Saints* was an extension of *Graceland* in that it was West African, which is more polyrhythmic and less accessible to American ears.

"…*The Capeman* was doo-wop and Latin music; it was a New York story, but as far as the world was concerned, I still hadn't returned to those good old days of yore when I was making hits – simple hits. On *You're The One*, I put together a band with three drummers from different cultural backgrounds, and I think it was a difficult sound to understand. So the first thing I decided to do this time was to make a record with sounds and rhythms that were American. If you want to talk to people, you'd better find a language that you share, and if there's some obstacle – if percussion in odd time signatures is an obstacle – then, unless you are indifferent to the problem, well, then you change it."

It was necessary, he said, to shut out the noise during his intensive creative process. "You need to keep a perspective, stay on an even keel and don't pay too much attention to what's being said about you, because it's such a distraction – praise and criticism both. So, basically, I have to ignore it. But when you come towards the marketplace, there's no way of ignoring it. I mean, you're in it".



Back with a *Surprise*: Paul Simon, 2006

"There are huge tides of events, and what can you do but join in or be swept away?"

Paul Simon

Like his fellow living legends, the then 64-year-old Simon was well aware of the massive weight of his own legacy, but he wasn't preoccupied by it. "It's not a question I ask too much: Who am I? What am I? The less ego you can function with, the higher the thinking process". He regarded his still-active contemporaries who continued adding to their legacies into what was once considered old age with collegial interest. As for Neil Young, four years younger, Simon said he understood the need to "get it out" on the contemporaneous *Living With War*, but he saw no point in preaching to the converted. The Stones' Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, born two years after Simon, were "incredibly entertaining, but they're not acting their age". He admired the ability of Bob Dylan, his elder by five months, to "frequently reinvent himself, at a very sophisticated level". It was apparent from *Surprise*, his 10th solo album, that Simon was still reinventing himself as well.

"I'm not interested in recapitulating my greatest hits," he said. "Every piece of work connects to the last, and the next – that's the journey. I've never made a decision to break that chain, or to follow any style or trend, or to pursue a hit. I've just followed wherever that path was gonna go."

Interestingly, Simon viewed his efforts to communicate in song as functionally therapeutic for his listeners. He might be a legend, but he also considered himself to be an everyman whose experiences were widely relatable. "I meant my internal dialogue to be overheard, because my internal dialogue is not that different from a whole lot of other people's," he asserted. "There are certain large groups of people who share my concerns and qualities of life who are going to recognise those thoughts. I don't think that those thoughts are insightful or revelatory. But there's something about them that reverberates in a way that makes you feel that you're not unattached to the world. There are huge tides of events, and what can you do but join in or be swept away? So when you find that there's somebody who's thinking along the same lines as you are, you relax – you open up a little bit. When you open up, then you're available to emotions."

How long, I wondered, would he continue to make music. "You could either say, 'I'm too old to do this,' or 'I've reached the stage of being a master,'" Simon replied. "In a certain sense, it's a pointless discussion with yourself. Your age is what your age is, and you're gonna do what you do. It's amazing, and also kind of chilling, just how fast the whole thing goes on and, obviously, how quickly it's over. So you try and use it and enjoy yourself and not get too thrown by irrelevant stuff, because you don't have enough time to waste on it. That's the best you can come up with because that's the way it is. And if you're not having fun, then you try and look around for another place where you'll have fun. I can't abide with the idea of giving up fun. You still want to think of something interesting to think of and do. And I don't think that goes away; I think that's just the way we are. I don't think you should ever allow it to go away."

It would be 12 more years before Simon would decide to retire from touring. But it's hard to imagine him stop trying to make sense of our changing reality – or from continuing to have fun. An active mind like his never stops – not until time runs out. ●

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